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COVER IMAGE: COURTESY WWW.THINKGEEK.COM

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editorial

Faking it

NEVER LET FACTS GET IN THE WAY...

Fake news continues to crop up in the headlines, even if what exactly is meant by this term remains somewhat nebulous: does it refer to outright untruths presented as news items or to coverage of objectively 'real' events in which the presentation of the 'facts' doesn't fit the confirmation bias of the reader? Examples of both are plentiful, but the waters have become muddied to the point where the cry of 'fake news' now rings out whenever a newspaper publishes a story someone else – whether politicians or particular interest groups – objects to.

Covering the wilder shores of news reporting, *Fortean Times* has long been aware of manufactured news items. The material to be found in American newspapers of the 19th and early 20th centuries, for example, runs the gamut from what appear to be obvious hoaxes dreamt up on slow news days or the descendants of the 'tall tales' of frontier life to seemingly credible bits of forteana giving names, dates and places. Some of these appear to offer tantalising hints of genuine mysteries; often enough, they turn out to be either unverifiable or simply fabricated. It's the kind of material that our own Theo Paijmans, in his regular 'Blasts from the Past' feature (taking a breather in this crowded issue), does a fine job of unearthing and investigating.

"You couldn't make it up!"

Then there are the knowingly absurdist stories concocted by tabloid 'newspapers' such as the *Weekly World News* in the US or the *Sunday Sport* in the UK, featuring a World War II bomber on the Moon, a bat child found in a cave and headlines like "Jeremy Corbyn Sex Dwarf Eaten by Otters". Is fake news necessarily reprehensible or dangerous when both its producers and consumers know it to be a kind of simulacrum produced solely for the purposes of material profit and idle amusement? Or, in the Ballardian and Baudrillardian world in which we now appear to live, does this growing elision of entertainment and information compromise public discourse to the point that the entire notion of truth simply breaks down and life becomes a kind of infinite, uncheckable news feed full of fake stories, dodgy infomercials and propaganda?

The website Snopes.com has always been a useful tool for checking up on stories that appear to be (and usually are) nothing more than urban legends, but over the course of the recent US presidential campaign it also started debunking what purported to be news items, such as those suggesting that Pope Francis supported Donald Trump. Snopes was cited as a possible third-party source of expertise to help Facebook fact-check some of the dubious material appearing on its news feeds, but itself came under a form of attack from the *Daily Mail*, who while reporting on alleged sexual and financial improprieties at the website seemed to be subtly undermining the notion of 'fact checking' itself; or so the *Guardian* suggested last year (16 Dec). A couple of months later (15 Feb), the same paper reported that the UK government had apparently hired advertising agency M&C Saatchi to combat "the increasingly widespread influence and propaganda of the so-called 'alt right'". It seems darkly ironic that the powers that be wish to save the world from the rising tide of post-truth by employing the dark arts of the hidden persuaders; we really must be in trouble.

This month, we grapple with this slippery contemporary issue by showing that, despite the contemporary obsession with fake news, we have most certainly been here before. David Clarke examines the way the British government, intelligence services and media spread false stories about the existence of German 'corpse factories' during World War I (p34), while Mike Dash looks at how the growth of true-life 'confessional' magazines in the 1920s led to a number of classic fortean cases being elaborated, exaggerated or even invented and the ways in which this has continued to bedevil fortean research ever since (p40). On a lighter note, as this is our April issue, Rob Gandy celebrates the fun side of fakery in a round-up of the best fortean April Fool hoaxes perpetrated by our truth-loving media over the years, from the Wiesbaden Martian to the Tasmanian Mock Walrus (p28). And if you believe that the Red Baron shot down a flying saucer 100 years ago this April, perhaps you should turn to Nigel Watson's Forum piece on p55. Meanwhile, not forgetting that this is also our Easter issue, Ted Harrison sets out for Jerusalem to find the site of Golgotha (p46); or at least he tries to. It seems no one can agree on where it really is...

DAVID R SUTTON

BOB RICKARD

PAUL SIEVEKING

Why fortean?
Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!
SEE PAGE 78

LISTEN

IT JUST MIGHT CHANGE YOUR LIFE

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strangedays

A murderous mermaid

Fish-tailed female held responsible for double drowning in Zimbabwe

CHINA PHOTOS / GETTY IMAGES

• At around midday on 19 February, two boys from Village 7, Gokwe, Zimbabwe, were seized by a "mermaid" near Pachemumvuri Dam, dragged under the water and drowned. The creature had allegedly been seen on the banks of the dam several times before. "It is reported that on the fateful day the two boys who were in Form One and Two at Ganye Secondary School were herding cattle when they saw the mermaid at the dam," said Chief Nemangwe, whose jurisdiction the area falls under. "According to a friend of the deceased boys, his companions jumped into the dam and tried to grab the mermaid because they believed it was just a big fish. But the mermaid pulled them down into the water." The friend then ran home to alert the elders, who arrived at the dam to find the boys lying on a rock, alive. The elders were "counselling" the boys when their parents arrived on the scene. "When their parents got to the dam they panicked, believing their children had died and started crying," said Chief Nemangwe. "A whirlwind suddenly engulfed the place before the mermaid swiftly appeared from the water and grabbed the boys for the second time, but this time their lifeless bodies resurfaced later."

According to local belief, when someone is seized by a mermaid, the last thing people should do is cry, as this can lead to dire consequences, such as the death of the victim. The Chief again: "Two other people that I am aware of were also killed at the same dam in similar circumstances. As a community we have since performed some rituals to calm down the water spirits. During the ceremony we slaughtered a beast and the meat was consumed without salt." Acting Midlands Provincial police spokesperson Assistant Inspector Ethel Mukwende said investigations were in progress to ascertain what really transpired.

Work on the pumps at Sengwa 2/Gwehava Dam in Gokwe once stopped after terrified workers complained of machines breaking down under mysterious circumstances, and blamed mermaids. The work later resumed after traditional healers brewed beer and carried out some rites to appease the water spirits. *zimbabwenewsonline.com, 5 Mar 2017.*

• Talk of dams and mermaids reminds us of a story from 2012. Chinese engineers working on the Bui dam in Ghana found that the functioning of their excavating machinery was obstructed by some force they regarded as supernatural, so they consulted "spiritualist scientists" in a Shanghai temple. These talented chaps "immediately spotted in the spiritual realm a mermaid (Mame Water) being the cause of the impediment to the smooth sail of events on the dam site." One of them travelled to the Bui River and managed to capture "a weird beast in the form of a snake with the head and hands of a woman". A local priest explained that it was not the sort of entity that is normally visible to us. "It is not good to see this kind of Mame Water physically," he said. "They are spiritual creatures which always remain unseen and the moment they are physically seen it means there is something gone wrong." [**FT293:20**].

• Another African 'mermaid' was encountered near a bridge in the Buffelsjags River in Western Cape, South Africa, on 12 January 2008. Daniël Cupido saw a figure "like that of a white woman with long black hair thrashing about in the water". Thinking to save her, he waded into the water, but stopped when he noticed a reddish shine in her eyes. The sight sent "shivers" down his spine, yet he was pulled forward as if hypnotised. He shouted to his friends to come and take a look. Martin Olckers said he saw a female figure swimming near a low water bridge and then standing on the bridge before diving back into the black water. It made "the strangest sound", like a woman crying. The villagers recognised the creature as something known locally as the Kaaiman, last seen in 1993 and more than 20 years before that. As Martin Olckers said he saw it standing, it presumably didn't have a fish's tail like a "conventional" mermaid. Some people held it responsible for drownings. [**FT238:19**]

For a wave of mermaid sightings in Israel in 2009, see **FT254:4**. That issue of *FT* also has several features on mermaids in general.

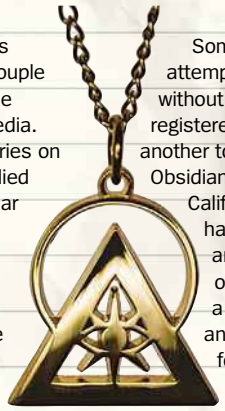
TURKEY CIRCLE
Sinister gobblers perform occult ritual to raise a dead cat?
PAGE 10

THE NEW IMPERIALISTS
The King of Germany and other monarchical pretenders
PAGE 20

CHINESE SKYWALKER
The funky new gibbon named after a Star Wars character
PAGE 23

The Conspirasphere

Get your T-shirts here! NOEL ROONEY scores himself some official merch from the Illuminati website... but is this commercial activity by the hidden masters actually anything new?



The 'Official Illuminati website' has excited a mini furore in the last couple of months, at least as much in the mainstream as the alternative media. Several newspapers have run stories on it, and questions have been bandied about on a few of the more popular conspiracy sites. Quite why it has suddenly become a Thing is unclear; to my knowledge, the website has been around since 2014 at least. But papers like the *Daily Express* and *Sun* have run articles giving the impression that the phenomenon has suddenly burst onto the Internet.

Actually it's a group of sites: there's illuminati.org, which looks like the home portal; illuminati.am (I believe .am is the signature for Armenian websites, which may or may not tell us something); and dodis.co, which appears to be the official merchandising arm of the group (you can get T-shirts and banners, as well as the now well-publicised pendant, which incorporates the representative cliché symbols of the Illuminati into one ugly hybrid, a sort of vulgar Monas Hieroglyphica of the New World Order).

There has been an enjoyable amount of agonising in the Conspirasphere as to whether this is really Them coming out of the (presumably rather well-appointed) closet, or merely a scam to tempt a few punters to part with money for a pendant and a copy of the (comically badly written) Illuminati Testament; the fact that there is a membership sign-up option has prompted a few to twist the tale a little further and suggest that it is a hoax on a hoax to entrap the unwary into signing up to the 'real' NWO. The TV ad (actually a YouTube video that has been around for a while now) is a velvety big-production number with a throaty voice-over offering, well, all the things you might expect from the benign hidden masters of the world; peace, love, and reassurance that They are watching. Along with some brief, bland bits of blurb under pretentious titles, it's the nearest thing to information on the sites.

Some commentators have attempted to trace the website, without much success. One part of it is registered to a domain shop in Canada, another to an individual apparently named Obsidian Maskreet, in Beverley Hills, California; perspicuous investigative hacks have suggested this may be an alias. There is a social media outlet too, which seems to have a large number of followers. Why anyone would go to these lengths for a scam is a question only marginally more mysterious than why the Masters of the Universe would need to rely on merchandising.

The appearance, or resurrection, of the site prompted me to go in search of other contenders for the Official Illuminati Website; it turns out that this is a crowded market, although to be fair the others are mostly pretty amateur by comparison. Nonetheless, there were a few gems littering the field. I particularly liked the wonderfully illiterate illuminati-order.org, which offers a beautiful example of why you shouldn't use Google Translate for your manifesto ("without forgetting the teachings them great masters all the times", as we in the know like to gurgle into our napkins). Equally entertaining is the illuminatiofficialafrica.org site, which offers, among the other benefits of joining the hidden masters, a golf package. If you prefer your Illuminati portals enigmatic, then I'd recommend illuminatiorder.org. The entry page is a shimmering pyramid; there is little else to the site except for a blank white square asking for a Key Value, whatever that is. If you want real payoff, type illuminati backwards into your search engine and you'll end up on the NSA website; now that *is* strange.

www.express.co.uk/news/weird/758675/Illuminati-website-New-World-Order-Illuminatioffical-org; http://illuminati-order.org/newworldorder/; www.illuminatiofficial.org/;www.illuminatiofficialafrica.org/blogs/tag/Illuminati%20Official%20Africa/

EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Batgirl lives in Ballykelly, Co Antrim

Irish Times, 30 Oct 2015.

Man flew through window

North Devon Advertiser, 18 Nov 1993.

Dolphin to keep homes free from government policies

Inside Housing, 21 Oct 2015.

Why a sudden penchant for Benny Hill could signal dementia

D.Telegraph, 11 Nov 2015.

Prince Charles' giant wooden carrot stolen

Western Daily Press, 6 Nov 2015

Hunt for Santa who stole helicopter

Sydney Morning Herald, 30 Nov 2015.

TRAPPED IN ICE

FLASH-FROZEN FOX

Hunter Franz Stehle, who found a dead fox encased in ice covering the Danube on 2 January, cut out a block of ice encasing the fox and put it on show in front of his family's hotel at Fridingen in Baden-Wurttemberg, southwest Germany, until the ice melted. He suspected it had drowned and was then frozen solid. He had seen a frozen deer and a wild boar before finding the fox. The image features in a Twitter photo contest for the best animal carcass (#BestCarcass). *BBC News, 13 Jan; Int. NY Times, 21 Jan 2017*. PHOTO: Johannes Stehle/DPA/Alamy Live News.

FRIGID FISH

The fish in the photograph above look as if they have frozen to death in mid-jump, but what really happened is more complicated. In 2015, the area around Lake Andes in South Dakota had been suffering from drought, and water levels were low. Thick ice formed on the lake's surface. Along with snow cover, it blocked out sunlight, preventing photosynthesis by algæ and other aquatic plants. Oxygen levels dropped and the fish suffocated under the icy surface, floating to the top in their thousands. At some point the ice may have expanded and, as it reached the shore, crumpled and shot upward, dead fish included. Or it's possible that strong winds pushed the frozen water and its fishy contents upward into a 4ft (1.2m) ice wall. Kelly Preheim, who took this photograph, said the thousands of frozen fish on the lake drew "hundreds of bald eagles, various gulls and American crows," who swooped in for the convenient feast. *Huffington Post, 14 Jan; Int. NY Times, 28 Jan 2017.*

ICY BATTLE

On 2 November 2016, Brad Webster, a science teacher in Unalakleet, a remote village on Alaska's unforgiving western coast, came upon two moose frozen in battle and encased in ice. He photographed the massive animals poking through the ice as they lay on their sides with antlers apparently locked together. It was the end of moose rutting season, and the animals were probably fighting over a female moose. Jeff Erickson, another teacher in Unalakleet, also photographed the frozen animals when he went to check out the scene a couple days later with Webster. "It was such a surreal sight – so serene and quiet, but a stark vision of how brutally harsh life can be," he wrote. Webster and a few others went back later and removed the animals from about 8in (20cm) of ice covering open water, recovering some of the spoiled meat for dog food and trapping bait.

For other flash-frozen animals, see **FT331:73, 333:67, 336:22**.

SIDELINES...

EARTHLIGHTS

Footage filmed in Wellington, New Zealand, during a 7.8 magnitude earthquake near Christchurch last November shows the night sky lit up with bright colours. Clips show flashes of green, white and blue over a span of a few seconds. Similar accounts of lights in the sky emerged following the previous Christchurch earthquake in 2011. Geologists point out that such lights have been spotted weeks before an earthquake, probably due to stress building in the fault lines. *Metro, 14 Nov 2016.*

LONELY HEART

A human heart was found in a plastic bag near a gas station in Norwalk, Ohio, baffling police. The preserved organ – with 'anomalies' likely to have been present at birth – was discovered last August. *Metro, 15 Sept 2016.*

NORTHERNMOST NAZIS

Russian scientists have discovered a secret Nazi military base on the island of Alexandra Land, 600 miles (965km) from the North Pole. Built in 1942, it was mainly used as a tactical weather station and was abandoned in 1944 when scientists stationed there were poisoned by polar bear meat (probably getting hypervitaminosis A from polar bear livers). *<i> 22 Oct 2016.*

MARTIN ROSS

FORTEAN FOLLOW-UPS

New updates on stories covered previously in FT

YANNICK PITOU / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Police carry a piece of debris from an unidentified aircraft found in the east of the French Indian Ocean island of La Reunion.

THE FATE OF MH370 [FT345:12]

In January, officials responsible for locating missing Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 announced that their two-year, £122 million search has come to an end. Having searched 120,000 km^2 (46,332 miles^2) of the southern Indian Ocean to a depth of 4.8km (three miles), teased out from the satellite data, they've found no trace of the plane and the 239 souls on board. However, a panel of experts, pointing to the locations of recovered debris, insist the search should be extended to include 25,000 km^2 (9,653 miles^2) north of the area already examined. On 4 March, families of those on board MH370 launched efforts to raise at least £12 million to fund a new Indian Ocean search.

A wing section called a flaperon was discovered on Reunion Island off Madagascar in July 2015, and confirmed as debris from MH370 the following September – it reportedly carried MH370's "unique numbers". Crash investigator Larry Vance said that the damage pattern on the flaperon showed that the plane ended its flight in a controlled ditch; but another expert, Mike Exner, insisted the damage on the flaperon and another found subsequently was consistent with high-speed flutter, indicating a rapid uncontrolled descent [**FT438:69**]. By November, seven of the 20 pieces of debris recovered from around the Indian Ocean were said to be almost certainly from the missing plane.

However in February, Jeff Wise, writing in the *Huffington Post*, asserted that the Réunion debris was completely coated in goose barnacles, a species that grows only immersed in the water. When the debris was tested in a flotation tank, it floated half out of the water. Wise said barnacles couldn't have grown on the exposed areas, a conundrum officials were unable to reconcile. The implication is that the piece did not arrive on Réunion by natural means, a suspicion reinforced by a chemical analysis of one of the barnacles, showing that it grew in water temperatures that no naturally drifting piece of debris would have encountered. Wise also cast doubt on the identification of the other recovered debris (but failed to provide any evidence to back up his scepticism).

To recap: early on the morning of 8 March 2014, MH370 took off from Kuala Lumpur en route to Beijing. After 40 minutes it passed the last navigational waypoint in Malaysian airspace. Six seconds after that it went electronically dark. Wise says that in the brief gap between air-control zones, when no one was officially keeping an eye on it, the plane pulled a U-turn, crossed back through Malaysian airspace, and then vanished from military radar screens. At that point the plane was completely invisible, and could have been flown anywhere in the world without fear of discovery.

However, three minutes later, a Satellite Data Unit (SDU) rebooted and initiated a log-on with an Inmarsat communications satellite orbiting high overhead. Wise points out that an SDU reboot is not something that can happen accidentally, or that airline captains generally know how to do. Over the next six hours, the SDU sent seven automated signals before going silent for good. Soon after the SDU reboot, the plane apparently turned south, flew fast and straight until in ran out of fuel, then dived into the sea. Using this information,

officials were able to generate a probabilistic "heat map" of where the plane most likely ended up. However, no one questioned whether the data could have been tampered with – a major oversight, says Wise, since the very same peculiar set of coincidences that made it possible to tease a signal from the Inmarsat data could have enabled a sophisticated hijacker to enter the plane's electronics bay (which lay beneath an unsecured hatch at the front of the business class cabin) and alter the data fed to the SDU.

If this vulnerability had been exploited, then the plane could have been flown not south over the ocean, but north toward land. Not all the Inmarsat data was susceptible to spoofing, says Wise. From the portion that wasn't, a narrow band of possible flight paths can be deduced: they all terminate in Kazakhstan, a close ally of Russia. Three ethnic Russians were aboard MH370, including one who was sitting close to the electronics bay hatch. Four and a half months later, a mobile launcher from a Russian anti-aircraft unit shot down another Malaysian airliner, MH17. Whether or not the Russians were responsible for MH370, Wise believes the failure of the seabed search and the inconsistencies in the aircraft debris should undermine complacency about the official narrative. *BBC News, 2 Nov + 20 Dec 2016, 17 Jan 2017; Sunday Times, 4 Dec 2016; [R] Metro, 18 Jan; Jeff Wise in Huffington Post, 12 Feb; Sunday Telegraph, 5 Mar 2017.*

SADDLEWORTH MOOR MYSTERY [FT242:80]

After a year-long investigation, a man whose body was found at Dovestone Reservoir on Saddleworth Moor, Greater Manchester, on 12 December 2015 has finally been identified as David Lytton, 67, sometime London taxi and tube driver who had lived in Pakistan since 2005. Police said he was "a bit of a loner" and "liked his own company". He had travelled from Lahore to London Heathrow two days before his body was found, and was caught there on CCTV. He had died after swallowing rat poison (strychnine), available in Pakistan but banned in the UK. He had not been reported missing, either in Pakistan or the UK. It then transpired he was formerly called David Lautenberg and was born in London in 1948 to Jewish refugees Sylvia and Hyman Lautenberg. He changed his name to Lytton after a falling-out with his family. He lived in Streatham, south London, for more than three decades before moving to Florida and then Lahore. Why he chose to die where he did is a complete mystery. *BBC News, Manchester Eve. News (online), 26 Jan; D.Telegraph, 27+29 Jan; (London) Eve. Standard, 10 Feb 2017.*

LURE OF THE COMMONPLACE [FT344:4]

During the summer, residents of Kidlington, an ordinary village north of Oxford, were bemused by the weekly arrival of up to 40 Chinese tourists, who wandered around a nondescript 1970s housing estate taking photos of flowerbeds, garage doors and parked cars and requesting selfies with local residents. On 23 October, one of the tour leaders was handed a questionnaire and the mystery was solved (sort of). The tourists were "looking for the true sense of this country" and they like it "because the environment makes you feel you are closer to the simplicity of your original self". Something existential, then. Previous theories for the cause of the influx included mistaken identity, a covert social experiment or possibly Oxfordshire's connection to *Inspector Morse*. Baz Daniels, who has lived in Kidlington for more than 20 years, asked a friend in China to try and explain the tourist influx. "Kidlington is apparently being marketed by Chinese tourist agencies as a beautiful English village on the way to Bicester Village shopping centre," he said. "Many of the visitors live in cities and love to see things like the hanging baskets and little flowers in people's gardens."

A month later, Sun Jianfeng, 48, a tour guide with Beijing Hua Yuan International Travel, offered a completely different explanation: the visitors, he said, were being punished for refusing to pay a hefty surcharge to visit nearby Blenheim Palace. Customers were normally charged £53 for an optional Chinese language tour of the stately pile, but some had realised they could buy an entry ticket on the day for only £24.90, to the annoyance of those who had paid more. The solution was to drop "those who had opted out" four miles (6.4km) away in Kidlington where they would not have time to walk to Blenheim Palace before continuing to the next coach stop. *BBC News, 1 Nov; D.Mail, 7 Dec 2016.*

ABOVE: Kidlington, Oxfordshire – not really all that exciting.

SIDELINES...

BOOM INVESTIGATION

Seismologists at the University of Maryland are trying to identify the source of mysterious loud booms that have been jolting residents of Cheverly from their sleep and damaging their homes for decades. Resident Nikki Greco described one as sounding like a truck ramming into the house. The booms caused cracks in her basement requiring a $50,000 loan to fix. *NBC Washington, 14 Dec 2016.*

FAIRWELL YAHYA

So, after 22 years, Yahya Jammeh, 51, self-styled "Excellency Sheikh Professor Doctor President" of Gambia, was voted out of office in December and forced into exile in January. He claimed to have invented a herbal cure for HIV (that only worked on Mondays and Thursdays), and in March 2009 he 'exorcised' 1,000 people by force-feeding them hallucinogenic potions [**FT250:16**]. *D.Telegraph, 3 Dec 2016; Sunday Telegraph, 22 Jan 2017.*

GOAT BURNING

Sweden's Christmas Goat didn't last long on its 50th anniversary. The giant figure, made of straw and wood, an annual Yuletide tradition in the city of Gavle since 1966, went up in flames just hours after it was inaugurated on 27 November. Arsonists just cannot stay away from the giant decoration, which seldom survives the season without someone trying to burn it down. *[AP] 28 Nov 2016.*

THE EYE DECEIVED

A distressed caller rang police on 16 December to report an elderly woman "frozen to death" in a parked car in Hudson, New York State. Officers found a seat-belted figure wearing an oxygen mask sitting motionless in the front passenger seat of the snow-covered car. They broke the rear window and discovered it was an extremely realistic mannequin. The car owner arrived and said he used it for his job selling medical training aids. *[CNN] BBC News, 17 Dec 2016.*

SIDELINES...

GIVE US A HAND

A human hand was discovered washed up on a beach at Freshwater Bay on the Isle of Wight on 28 December, and passed to police. It was said to have been in the water for a "significant amount of time", and was sent away for analysis. *[AP] 29 Dec 2016.*

WEIGHT IS BANG ON

Paula Richards went to weigh herself on a set of Aldi scales when they exploded, sending glass shards across her bathroom in Atherstone, Warwickshire. *Sun, 30 Dec 2016.*

AUTO-SNACK

On 30 November a man entered the Wilko store (previously known as Wilkinson's) in Haymarket, Sheffield, went upstairs to the electrical aisle, picked up some bolt cutters, chopped off his big toe and stood eating it. The police were called and he was taken to hospital. *[PA] 1 Nov 2016.*

ATHLETES IN ARIES

The day to be born for athletic success is 23 March, with the Sun in early Aries (the Ram). The birthday is shared by runner Mo Farah, rower Sir Steve Redgrave, cyclists Jason Kenny and Sir Chris Hoy, first sub-four-minute miler Sir Roger Bannister, world champion boxer Joe Calzaghe and former England cricket champion Mike Atherton. If you want to sire a champion, the date for conception is advised to be 29 June. *D.Mail, 18 Aug 2016.*

MARTIN ROSS

Poultry in motion

Did turkeys perform occult ritual to raise cat from dead?

JONATHAN DAVIS

ABOVE: Jonathan Davis filmed the turkeys in Boston, commenting "It is the craziest thing I've ever seen... Bro, this is wild!"

A flock of 20 turkeys was observed performing what looks like a bizarre ritual around the body of a dead cat that had been run over in Boston, Massachusetts. Jonathan Davis filmed the startling spectacle and uploaded the 24-second clip to Twitter on 24 February with the caption: "These turkeys trying to give this cat its 10th life." They were walking in a circle – not running or distressed, but walking with intention – around the cat in the middle of the road. The clip quickly went viral (and earned the splendid headline "Gobble, gobble, toil and trouble" in the *Daily Mail*).

Biologist Debra Kriensky told the *New York Post*: "It's certainly unusual. Circling in itself isn't unusual behaviour for turkeys – the males sometimes circle females when getting ready to breed... But it's unusual to see so many circling a dead cat for example."

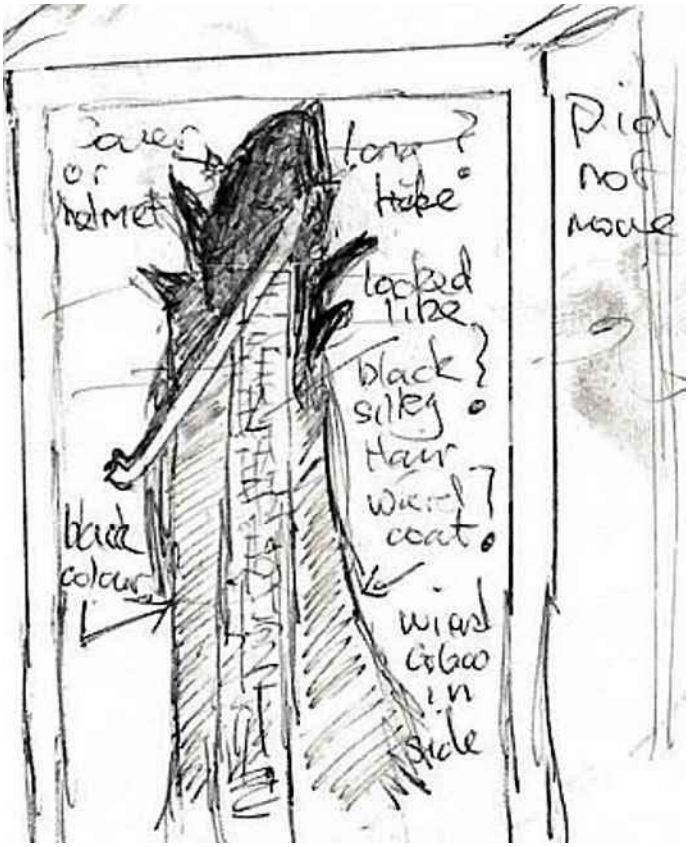
Perhaps the birds are performing what's called a "predator inspection," says Alan Krakauer, a biologist who studies the behavioural ecology of birds. He explained that turkeys, when faced with an animal that might eat them, sometimes follow the risky route of actually *approaching* the predator. It can help signal to other turkeys in the area that there's a threat, or help the turkeys evaluate how big a danger the predator is. "Or it could let the predator know the prey are aware of its presence, which might encourage the predator to move elsewhere to seek an easier meal," he said; "a lot like a group of small songbirds mobbing a hawk or owl they have discovered." Such behaviour could of course backfire – if the predator is more conscious than the cat in the video. Krakauer continues: "During my studies of wild turkeys I watched a coyote trot through a group of turkeys – the turkeys gave it some space but acted alert in a similar manner to this video. In that instance the coyote kept walking and the turkeys went back to their business. However, in this video, the dead cat 'predator' doesn't get up to leave, and the turkeys appear to be kind of stuck in their pattern of behaviour. Maybe they are waiting to see if the cat wakes up?" That is, waiting to see if the dead will arise, instead of ritually working to raise the dead.

The turkeys could be stuck in some kind of never-ending circle

Richard Buchholz, a professor of biology at the University of Mississippi has also seen this kind of circling behaviour in the turkey bird family, which includes chickens, pheasants, and quail. Following the tail in front of them is a way they stick together as a flock, he says. What could be happening is that the turkeys are stuck in some kind of never-ending circle, with each bird following the tail in front of it. *The Verge, npr.org, 2 Mar; D.Mail, Sun, 3 Mar 2017.*

West Country weird

Faceless alien at a bus stop and a polt in a block of flats



SWNS.COM

LEFT: A witness sketch of the 7ft alien.
ABOVE: Gilton House, Brislington.

YEOVIL ALIEN

A man is convinced he saw a 7ft (2m) tall faceless alien waiting at a bus stop in Ilchester Road, Yeovil, Somerset, around 2.45pm on 15 December 2016. "I was driving up the road and saw this dark-looking figure by Yeovil College," said the man, who asked not to be named. "It looked quite tall and had this big Stetson hat. I slowed down to have a closer look and thought it's not a man, it was about 7ft [2m] tall. It had this long thin tube coming from the top of it and spikes coming out of the side. The middle bit of it was like moleskin and hairy. The thing wasn't moving at all and was in this box that had sparks coming out of it. It was like something out of science fiction." The encounter unnerved him so much that he hadn't slept for a week. He drew an annotated drawing of the entity, noting it was black, wore a "weird" coat and had silky hair. "I just keep thinking I was in the wrong place at the wrong time," he said. "It's just mad." *Western Daily Press, 23 Dec 2016.*

"It was like something out of science fiction"

PESKY POLTERGEIST?

More strangeness from the West Country: some residents in Gilton House – a block of 46 warden-monitored flats in Brislington, Bristol – began noticing weird goings-on some months ago. Gloria Edie, 69, said she initially thought she was going mad when she found a plug in her bedroom had been smashed and a walking stick was missing. She then noticed that ornaments in her living room were being switched, moved or turned around whenever she went out. Things would go missing and then reappear in plain sight later after she returned from a trip to the shops. "A couple of other residents said they too had experienced strange things happening," she said. "Some said that they noticed that when they went out, they'd come back and their front door would be unlocked when they clearly remember locking it. The chap upstairs said all his lights were switched on whenever he returned home. I began to double-check things and noticed more stuff was happening. One time my fireplace was completely hooked off the wall. I called in my neighbours and they all agreed someone must have done that, it didn't unhook itself." At a residents' meeting on 31 January, some said they would install CCTV cameras inside their front doors and others expressed fears that someone had obtained a master key. Did anyone wonder whether a particularly vigorous poltergeist might be at work? *Western Daily Press, 2 Feb 2017.*

SIDELINES...

NESSIE SIGHTINGS

Last year the number of Nessie sightings was the highest since 2000 (when there were 11), according to the Official Loch Ness Sightings Register. Two of the seven sightings were photographed on the same day at different locations round the loch and two were by webcam, including one from an online watcher in the US. *Dundee Courier & Advertiser, 7 Dec 2016.*

HOTHEAD

A shoplifter in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, hid a sizzling roast chicken under her hat in Tesco and was arrested after swooning from the heat. Fellow customers rushed to help the woman as she began fainting in the aisle. *Sun, 22 Jan 2017.*

SUITABLY NAMED

In September 2015, student Alison Smith, 24, was punched unconscious by her 40-year-old lecturer boyfriend before he poured salt in her eyes. The vile academic, sacked by the University of Sussex after a 3,000-strong petition, was Dr Lee Salter. *D.Mirror, 16 Aug 2016; Sun, 19 Jan 2017.*

FROG WEDDING

Priests married two frogs in a village in Assam in a bid to appease the rain god Barun and end a drought. Hundreds of guests attended the two-hour Hindu ceremony, showering the frogs in flowers and then holding a feast for the newlyweds. The frogs were being kept as 'pets' (hostages?) until the rain arrived. *Metro, 6 Sept 2016.*

COPROLITE CHAMPION

George Frandsen, 36, from Florida, has earned the Guinness World Record for the largest collection of coprolites. His collection of 1,277 fossilised turds features samples from 15 US states and eight other countries. The largest specimen, weighing 4lb 3.5oz (1.9kg) and nicknamed 'Precious', was produced by a huge Miocene crocodilian species in South Carolina. *[UPI] 15 Nov 2016.*

SIDELINES...

SICK JOKE

The New Mexico Department of Health said about 70 of its employees fell sick with gastrointestinal issues after its Christmas party. At the time of the report, investigators had not identified a specific contaminated food. More than 200 employees attended the catered luncheon in Santa Fe. *NBC San Diego, 22 Dec 2106.*

ETERNAL FLAME SPUDS

A screengrab from a video apparently shot on 29 November and circulated on the Internet appears to show two young men in Bishkek, capital of Kyrgyzstan, roasting potatoes on the eternal flame at the city's memorial to the country's World War II dead in Victory Square. The mayor's office has asked residents to help identify the men; it was not clear what charges they might face. *Radio Free Europe (online), 6 Dec 2016.*

PRIMATE PERIL

A report by Conservation International concludes that 60 per cent of the world's primates (apes, monkeys, lemurs, tarsiers and lorises – about 300 species) are facing extinction as agriculture and industry destroy forest habitats and the animals' populations are hit by hunting and trade. *Guardian, 19 Jan 2017.*

MARTIN ROSS

Creature features

A microscopic human ancestor and an outsized amphibian

S CONWAY MORRIS / JIAN HAN

ANCESTRAL OLD BAG

A team of British scientists has announced in the journal *Nature* that humanity's earliest known evolutionary ancestor is a 1mm creature resembling a "wrinkled old sack" that spent its life "wriggling around" on the ocean floor 540 million years ago. One of its most intriguing features was an apparent lack of an anus, meaning it ate and excreted from the same large aperture. The fossil was unearthed in Shaanxi province, China, and named *Saccorhytus coronarius*. The team had to crunch through three tonnes of limestone to find just 45 of the microfossils. Their discovery means we can now trace our roots back a further 30 million years. The creature is thought to be the most primitive example of the deuterostome, a category of animal life from which vertebrates eventually emerged. Most other early deuterostome groups date from about 510–520 million years ago, when they had already begun to diversify into vertebrates, and animals like sea squirts, starfish, sea urchins and acorn worms.

Simon Conway Morris, professor of evolutionary palæobiology at Cambridge, said: "To the naked eye, the fossils we studied look like tiny black grains, but under the electron microscope the level of detail is jaw-dropping. All deuterostomes had a common ancestor, and we think that is what we are looking at here." The creature's body was symmetrical, a characteristic inherited by many of its evolutionary descendants, including humans. It was covered with a thin, flexible skin, suggesting it had some form of muscles, leading researchers to conclude that it got around by wriggling. The small conical structures on its body may have allowed swallowed water to escape, and so were perhaps the precursor of gills. *D.Telegraph, Guardian, D.Mail, 31 Jan 2017.*

GIANT FROG SPOTTED

In March 2013 a strange creature was seen crawling out of Lake Itasca in north-central Minnesota. The state is known as "the land of 10,000 lakes"; the actual figure is 11,842. Lake Itasca is less than two square miles in area and has a depth of around 35-40ft (11-12m). The witness was 'Don', a keen outdoorsman who was strolling along the lakeshore with his German shepherd dog Ben when he noticed a disturbance in the water at a distance of around 50ft (15m). As he got closer, he was stunned to see a huge frog crawl out of the water and, for a couple of seconds, peer intently and eerily in his direction. It was truly enormous: Don reckons about 4ft (122cm) in length. He thought about taking a picture with his iPhone, but before he could do so, the creature flopped back into the water with a powerful splash, and was gone.

Don spent the entire day and night staking out that area of the lake, but the beast did not return. Monster-hunter Ken Gerhard said: "Back in 1995, there were an incredibly large number of deformed frogs that were found in a pond in southwest Minnesota. It made big national news. It was looked at as a sign of the times: there was so much pollution that man's impact on the environment was causing these really bizarre frog mutations." The US Geological Survey said: "Malformations included missing limbs, missing digits, extra limbs, partial limbs, skin webbing, malformed jaws, and missing or extra eyes... It is likely that one or more combinations of chemicals, biological, and physical factors are responsible for causing the malformations in Minnesota frogs." Whether these factors could lead to a frog the size of an Alsatian is a bit of a stretch. All we can hope for is another sighting... *mysteriousuniverse.org, 4 Oct 2016.*

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MATT PATTINSON

ARCHÆOLOGY

PAUL SIEVEKING reports on an enigmatic statuette from a museum vault, a Neolithic 'nativity scene' that predates the birth of Christ by 3,000 years and a claim that Abraham vandalised Turkey's most ancient site.

REUTERS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

MARCO MORELLI

ABOVE LEFT: The puzzling Neolithic figure displayed recently in Athens. **ABOVE RIGHT**: Neolithic rock art in the Egyptian Sahara; it's discoverer suggests it shows the Nativity.

WHAT IS IT?

Until 26 March, an enigmatic statuette was exhibited in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, part of a temporary exhibition of some 200,000 antiquities held in the museum vaults and not on permanent show. The 14in (36cm) figure was carved from granite, without the benefit of metal tools, as it dates from the late Neolithic, about 5,000 BC. It has a pointed nose and long neck leading to a markedly round belly, flat back and cylindrical stumpy legs. "It could depict a human-like figure with a bird-like face, or a bird-like entity which has nothing to do with man but with the ideology and symbolism of the Neolithic society," said Katya Manteli, an archæologist with the museum. Experts also cannot be sure of its provenance, as it belongs to a personal collection. They assume only that it is from the northern Greek regions of Thessaly or Macedonia. How they are so certain of its age is not explained. It could depict a human, but is asexual, with no sign of breasts or genitals. *[R] BBC News, 14 Feb 2017.*

ABRAHAM, IDOL-SMASHER

A new Turkish documentary claims the ancient temple site of Göbekli Tepe to be the work of Telah, idol-worshipping father of the patriarch Abraham. Göbekli Tepe in southeastern Anatolia has circles of massive T-shaped stone pillars, by some margin the world's oldest known megaliths, erected before the shift from hunter-gathering to agriculture. (See "Paradise regained?" by Sean Thomas, **FT220:46-51; FT289:23**, **310:18.**) The site dates back to 11,800-8,600 BC, far too old to be associated with Abraham, who is usually placed around 1800 BC.

The documentary was produced and funded by the Diyarbakir provincial governor's office, the Turkish Development Ministry, and the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation, the nation's public broadcaster. While Andrew Collins and Graham Hancock have implied that Göbekli Tepe was constructed by a lost civilisation related to or identical with the Nephilim and/or Atlantis, it appears that the Turkish documentary makers were simply going for some old-fashioned Qur'anic literalism coupled with a dash of Turkish nationalism.

The narrator describes the site and says (in Turkish): "Who can tell us that it was not Aser [Terah], father of Prophet Abraham, who built the statues in Göbekli Tepe? Or can we claim that the temple where the idols that Prophet Abraham broke was not Göbekli Tepe?" One broken pillar, featuring a sculpture of a fox, is identified as the specific idol broken by the hand of Abraham himself. The claim refers back to an Islamic tale, found in the Qur'an (21:51-71), and based on earlier Jewish folklore that Abraham's father made idols that the young patriarch smashed in his zeal for monotheism. In the Qur'anic account, Abraham has a conflict with the people of Ur, in which they vouch for the efficacy of their idols. To prove them wrong, "in the people's absence he went into the temple where the idols stood, and he brake them all in pieces, except the biggest of them; that they might lay the blame upon that" (21:58). The people of Ur then try to burn Abraham alive for his desecration, but God saves him from the flames. For Ur, read Edessa: by Late Antiquity the site of the Mesopotamian city of Ur had been forgotten and the birthplace of Abraham became identified with the Turkish city of Edessa (now called Sanlıurfa), which is only seven miles (12km) southeast of Göbekli Tepe. *jasoncolavito.com, 10 Jan 2017.*

OLDEST NATIVITY SCENE?

Neolithic rock art in the Egyptian Sahara, painted in reddish-brown ochre, depicts a star in the east, a newborn baby between parents and two animals. It was found on the ceiling of a small cavity by geologist Marco Morelli, director of the Museum of Planetary Sciences in Prato, near Florence, during an expedition to sites between the Nile valley and the Gilf Kebir Plateau.

"It's a very evocative scene which indeed resembles the Christmas nativity, but it predates it by some 3,000 years," said Morelli. He found the drawing in 2005, but only now has the amazing find been publicised. It features a man, a woman missing her head because of a painting detachment, and a baby drawn slightly above the adults, as if rising towards the sky. On the upper part is a headless lion, a mythical beast which appears in several rock art drawings from the same area, while below is a baboon or anthropomorphic monkey. In the east, the artist has drawn what appears to be a star. The researchers called the site the "Cave of the Parents". *livescience.com, 23 Dec 2016.*

CLASSICAL CORNER

FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

210: ALL SHIPSHAPE

"No one ever went to Hell in a black ship" – Homer

Jehovah, wearing his naval architect's hat, gave (Genesis 6-9) Noah a very specific DIY ark-building set of instructions: build a vessel of gopher wood, smeared inside and out with pitch, with three decks and inside compartments, an entrance on the side, 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, 30 cubits high with a roof finished to a cubit upwards – a cubit was measured from elbow to finger-tips, hence of variable length. A fair-sized hulk. But, just how did he get all those animals in? – We won't go into the question of disposal of bladder and bowel effluvia. Unless we reckon the Ark to have been an aquatic proto-Tardis.

After all, Noah was (Genesis 7.6) 600 years old, an ancient mariner by terrestrial standards, average for a Time-Lord. Cries out for a mini-series with resurrected William Hartnell. Meanwhile, we must make do with periodically reported sightings of the vessel on Mount Ararat – talking Turkey here, we ark-eologists [see **FT44:14-15, 54:27, 74:47, 120:34-39, 139:66, 152:34-39**, etc]

Demetrius 'Poliorketes' (337-283 BC) – his nickname means 'Besieger of Cities', not 'Taker', was the first to deploy ships with 15 or 16 banks of oars (Plutarch, Demetrius, chs43 paras4-5). Or does this means 15/16 rowers per? Debate continues – a case of either/oar?

They worked, unlike the monster (Plutarch subjoins) constructed by Ptolemy Philopator (r. 221-205 BC): 40 banks of oars, 280 cubits long, 48 cubits high to top of stern, propelled by 4,000 rowers, also carrying 400 extra sailors and 3,000 soldiers. But, gibes Plutarch, the thing was merely for show, being unable to move. Another uselessly large vessel was the flagship of Philip V of Macedon, which after their victory the Romans insultingly allowed him to keep, confiscating his other ships (Polybius, *Histories*, bk18 ch44 para6) – could add a verse here to John Masefield's 'Cargoes'.

Philopator also had built (Athenæus, *Learned Men at Dinner*, chs20e-206c) a pleasure boat, likened by some moderns to an oversized catamaran, luxurious enough to satisfy the most exigent Russian oligarch, with its ample dimensions, luxurious cabins and suites and purple sails – outdoing the hues in that classic ditty 'Red Sails in the Sunset' – and fitted out for maritime orgies – one visualises navel engagements without loss of semen.

His aforementioned monster was an attempt to out-godzilla the good ship *Syracusia*, designed (c. 240 BC) for King Hieron II by Archimedes, taking time off from his much-disputed burning of Roman ships' sails by gigantic refracting mirrors and shouting 'Eureka' – Greek for "I've found my rubber duckie" – in his bathtub. Athenæus (chs206d-209e) categorises the details. Cargo capacity almost 2,000 tons, space for 1,942 passengers, 200 soldiers, and a catapult. As Noah's Ark, it was pitch-coated, reinforced with horsehair, praised by modern experts – cf. Lionel Casson's *Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World* (1971) as earliest example of pro-active anti-fouling technology. Every detail was the last word in luxury. Apart from opulent cabins, passenger amenities included a flowered, canopied deck, gymnasium, hot-water pool, and (a touch of Swan Hellenic Cruises, if not the *Titanic*) a library and mosaics depicting the entire *Iliad*. Also (again) a masterpiece of futility: it sailed only once, then dry-docked, clocking up immeasurably less furlongs than our naval Queens *Elizabeth* & *Mary*.

" The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,
Burned on the water: the poop was beaten gold;
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
The winds were lovesick with them; the oars were silver,
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke... she did lie
In her pavilion, cloth-of-gold, of tissue...
(*Antony & Cleopatra*, Act 2 Scene 2)

Bill the Bard's rhapsody is almost verbatim from Plutarch (*Antony*, ch26), endorsing the common view that the biographer was his prime source for the Roman plays.

Hannibal was more practical-minded, despite his Roman biographer (chs10-1) Cornelius Nepos's moral qualms, defeating the armada of King Eumenes of Pergamum by catapulting into his flagship clay pots containing live poisonous snakes.

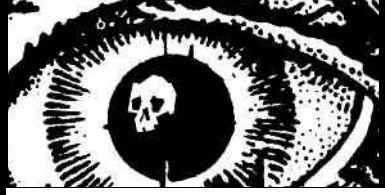
Around AD 150, Lucian (*The Ship*) left an excited account of the giant grain carrier *Isis* that he'd just seen docked at Athens's Piræus. He expatiates on its size (180ft x 45ft x 44ft), its tonnage (c. 12,000, capable of transporting an entire years' worth of grain to Attica), its scarlet sail, gilded prow, the name *Isis* elaborately painted on, with a crew the size of an army – "all relying on one little man steering with a broomstick-like tiller."

When not shagging his three sisters or designating his racehorse Consul, Caligula amused himself with his pleasure boats on Lake Nemi. Rediscovered in 1929 (burnt in 1944), with Mussolini taking a keen and doubtless envious interest, Suetonius's biography (ch37 para2) has this awestruck description: "Ten banks of oars, jewelled sterns, multi-coloured sails, enormous bathrooms, banquet-halls, colonnades, even profuse vines and fruit-trees, that he might feast amid songs and merriment along the Campanian shore."

In AD 59, Nero decided to bump off Agrippina the Queen Mum. Since she was long fortified against poison by a diet of antidotes, the plan was to sink her in a collapsible boat – he and mistress Poppæa got the idea from a theatrical show – there was also a Greek precedent. As described by Tacitus (*Annals*, bk14 chs 4-8), the scheme was a total clap-out; cf. Alexis Dawson's hilarious 'Whatever Happened to Lady Agrippina?' *Classical Journal* 64, 1969, 251-67. The supposedly doomed vessel failed to telescope – only Agrippina's cabin ceiling fell in, crushing a male companion, and no one remembered she was a strong swimmer, making it through the calm (hardly ideal for staging a fake shipwreck) Bay of Naples to her villa where she was presently slaughtered by a military SWAT team.

"Every shipwreck brings out merrymakers" – Fort, Books, p636.

ABOVE: Mussolini admires one of Caligula's pleasure boats, rediscovered in Italy's Lake Nemi in 1929.



MATT PATTINSON

GHOSTWATCH

ALAN MURDIE attends a conference examining the ghostly dimensions of human illness

A SICKNESS OF SPIRIT

For thousands of years different cultures around the world have believed in a psychic, and often specifically ghostly, dimension to human illness and suffering. The belief that sickness and misfortune are caused by discarnate entities – and the corresponding idea that symptoms can be relieved by spiritual means such as prayer, ritual or exorcism – are universal notions that can be traced back for millennia (see for example *Magico-Medical Means of Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 2012, by JoAnn Scurlock).

Equally, doubts concerning such beliefs have been ventilated for centuries. Whilst the Renaissance Italian poet Tasso (1544-1595) was convinced he spoke with spirits, baffling his friend Manso, others variously labelled Tasso as an insane genius, love-sick, a victim of oppression or simply one feigning madness (see Torquato Tasso: *A Study of the Poet and of his Contribution to English Literature,* 1965, by CP Brand).

Since the end of the 18th century, Western medicine has increasingly rejected any doctrine of spirits. Orthodox medicine and psychiatry operate from a presumption that both body and brain lack any spiritual or mental component relevant to either treating illness or its causation. To this purely materialist dogma early psychology, Freudian psychoanalysis and psychical research all mounted varying degrees of challenge and resistance.

This same materialist conceit was openly questioned at an interesting one-day conference "Spirit Influence on Mental Health: Is 'spirit' intrusion an important overlooked contribution in hallucinatory disorders?" on 4 February 2017. Held at Regent's University, London, it attracted some 90 attendees, being organised by the Spirit Release Forum, which has the avowed aim of "helping individuals find spiritual, mental, emotional and physical well-being through an understanding of how spirit/soul consciousness operates through the body". It brought together a range of speakers to consider ideas that are controversial – to put it mildly. As Guy Playfair wrote in the context of the Enfield Poltergeist: "Mention of spirits invariably polarises people into either fanatical believers or total sceptics" (in *This House is Haunted*, 1980 + 2013).

Attending this conference, I was particularly interested in the approach to evidence. Having worked professionally for many years as an advocate in cases before courts and tribunals where an assessment of the physical or mental health of individuals is an issue, I am aware of the many difficulties in achieving a correct diagnosis or verdict. From a psychical research perspective, when considering claims of the paranormal, I have long considered that the health of witnesses and their families can be very important when homes are reported as 'haunted'.

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

LEFT: The Renaissance poet Tasso believed that he could communicate with spirits; others wondered whether he was insane or feigning madness.

THE MATERIALIST CONCEIT WAS QUESTIONED AT THE CONFERENCE

The conference opened with a recognition of how commonplace reports of experiences of ghosts remain in developed societies, with the first session delivered by Dr Erlendur Haraldsson, a psychologist from Iceland and a veteran psychical researcher. He cited the European Human Values Study (1980-1983), which found that up to a third of the population in some Western countries believe they have been in touch with a deceased person, with a European average of 25 per cent. Comparing results with earlier surveys commencing from the Society for Psychical Research's monumental collection *Phantasms of the Living* (1886) vols 1 & 2, patterns appear suggesting that individuals who make their post-mortem presence felt are statistically more likely to have suffered a violent or unexpected death (e.g. in murders, suicides and accidents). Dr Haraldsson also spoke on research findings into reincarnation in non-Western nations going back to the 1970s.

The next speaker, Dr David Furlong, diverged greatly from this straightforward presentation of parapsychological data, taking proceedings onto a wholly different level with an outline of his beliefs as a practising spiritual healer. A co-organiser of the conference, at the outset he pointed out he is not a medical doctor (he is actually an expert in town planning and architecture), but he speaks from direct experience as a spiritual healer, ridding patients of unwanted spirit attachments.

In summary, Dr Furlong's position is that humans are spiritual beings, each possessing a spirit which has chosen to be incarnated, and enjoying an inner mental world every bit as vast as the outer one. As a result of trauma – which may occur in this life or in previous incarnations – part of the personal spirit can split and fragment into a multitude of sub-personalities (although a soul or higher self simultaneously remains). These damaged sub-personalities may attract negative attention from discarnate spirits or 'dark energies'. The role of the spiritual healer is to re-integrate these fragments, through hypnosis, therapy and spiritual techniques. This may involve extensive courses of therapy, one extreme case requiring 200 sessions to remove spirit attachments.

Concerning the symptoms caused by external entities and affecting their chances of recovery, the patient retains a degree of choice. Dr Furlong also spoke of the added effects of the patients' chakras and of angelic influences, incorporating ideas from Eastern and Western religious traditions.

Thus he presented a complex model of the personality as subject to physical-mental-spiritual interactions. In advancing such hypotheses, he is not alone; a handful of psychiatrists in the UK and USA such as Dr Alan Sanderson and psychologists such as Tom Zisner have publicly endorsed similar ideas and have written about them. (See *Soul-Centred Healing,* 2011, by Tom Zisner). But these ideas are certainly unsupported and contradict existing standard scientific models.

Complicating matters, an alternative spiritual model was presented by the next speaker, Mike Williams, a practising medium for 35 years. He specialises in clearing haunted houses and helping people hearing voices, work detailed in his book *Schizophrenia or Spirit Possession* (2014). He maintains that spirit attachment causing distress and illness is a reality and provides a better model than many conventional ones for explaining schizophrenia (or at least patients labelled as schizophrenic). However, he departs substantially from the model presented by Dr Furlong, advancing a rather traditional view of the spirit world, envisaging spirits of the deceased lingering in an afterlife dimension interconnecting with the material world, before translating to Heaven. The goal of mediums such as himself is to ensure transition of these spirits, whereupon the physical or mental symptoms afflicting the living person disappear. He rejects reincarnation.

My question to both speakers was to what

MANAN VATSYAYANA / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: A young Indian woman believed to be possessed by evil spirits goes into a state of trance at the 650-year-old shrine of Sufi Saint Hazrat Shahdana Wali.

extent they examined the medical history of clients prior to applying their techniques. Both stated that as a rule they do not explore the pre-existing medical history. This struck me as a diagnostic weakness for both proposed therapeutic approaches. Long-standing experience with haunted properties indicates that conventional medical or psychological explanations lay behind some manifestations rather than discarnate entities. Sometimes it can be as straightforward as a person hallucinating from excessive medication, the ghosts vanishing once a more moderate dosage is achieved. Neurological disorders, imagination, neurosis and drug addiction may all be causes.

Moreover, whilst not subscribing to psychosocial theories that attempt to ascribe all cases of unusual illness or psychic phenomena to iatrogenic diseases (basically ailments caused by the doctor, therapist or healer themselves), I believe some alleged hauntings are triggered purely by suggestion. Negligent and reckless pronouncements of psychics and mediums can result in what have been dubbed 'ersatz poltergeists' or 'phoneygeists'.

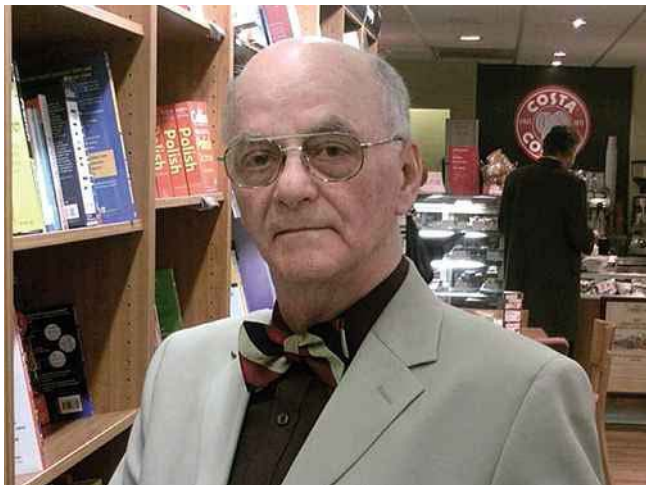
Existing conditions may also be exacerbated where a patient actually experiences genuinely paranormal events, e.g. incidents of spontaneous telepathy, rapping sounds or object movements themselves possibly symptoms of underlying psychological distress or illness (see *The Paranormal and the Recognition of Personal Distress,* 1981, by James F McHarg, *Journal of the SPR* vol 51 200-209). However, their origins may lie in the unconscious mind of the individual rather than discarnate influence.

Following lunch, the conference received the testimony of an individual currently undergoing spirit release therapy, who framed personal experiences in terms of entities, dark energy and curses accumulated both in this life and in past incarnations, spread over nearly 1,500 years. Unfortunately, no independent proof of these past lives, curses or traumas was provided outside supposedly recovered serial reincarnation memories and a personal conviction of being subjected to numerous curses in this life. Inevitably, such a deficiency of evidence and corroboration engenders caution and precludes uncritical acceptance of such claims.

Looking back to the 1970s, past life regression through hypnosis promoted by Arnold Bloxham (see *More Lives Than One?* 1977, by Jeffrey Iverson) provides a further precedent for doubting such claims. Unfortunately, no corroboration for these often vividly recalled past lives was obtainable from historical records.

Furthermore, the generation of false memories by patients undergoing therapy is a problem dating back to the early days of psychoanalytic treatments pioneered by Freud in Vienna in the 1890s. Again, precedents may be found more recently with the serious problems and social panics that arose during the 1980s and 1990s with allegations of childhood sexual abuse founded upon questionable and spurious recovered memory techniques, often involving hypnosis. These techniques contributed to many unfounded allegations of organised ritual abuse and also fuelled then fashionable claims of alien abduction.

Nonetheless, it became apparent during discussions that some members of the audience readily accepted the serial reincarnation model, both practising hypnotherapists and troubled individuals actually undergoing therapy for presumed spirit attachments. Listening to some of the latter, I felt that at the stage they had reached it would be prudent not to express any point of view at the conference. Discourse



'Exorcism turned loving husband into killer'

A night of exorcism to rid Michael Taylor of evil spirits instead put the Devil in his heart and turned him into a homicidal maniac, it was claimed at Leeds Crown Court yesterday.

Within hours of the bizarre church ceremony Taylor killed his "darling" wife Christine, aged 29, with unspeakable brutality.

Mr Geoffrey Baker, prosecuting, said Taylor tore her

Michael Taylor

Christine Taylor

ABOVE LEFT: Dr Terence Palmer, a hypnotherapist and practitioner of spirit release therapy. **ABOVE RIGHT**: Newspaper coverage of the tragic case of Michael Taylor, a mentally ill man who brutally murdered his wife after undergoing an exorcism in 1974.

veered on to the question of supposed pacts and contracts that might be formed with discarnate spirits and dark forces and how these could be nullified and voided in therapy. This had echoes of even earlier and historic social panics, including the pacts of sorcerers found in the fantasies of witch-finders in the 16th and 17th centuries and later inspiration for the mid-20th century black magic fiction of Dennis Wheatley. Today, 'dark energy' has substituted a personified Devil as the other party forming these alleged soul-threatening bargains.

More widely, it struck me that many of the critiques raised concerning conventional psychotherapy and its sometimes exotic variants (e.g. Arthur Janov's still current primal scream therapy, where patients are encouraged 'to scream their little heads off' to cite the rather dismissive view of Robert A Baker *Hidden Memories: Voices and Visions from Within,* 1996) were applicable here. The fact a patient undergoes a strange experience does not in itself validate the explanation or interpretation offered for it, whether by the patient or the therapist. What for the patient, the psychoanalyst or the shaman may be true on a symbolic mental level is not necessarily true in any objective sense. Psychical research initially reacted against the materialism that identified the body with the real person; but it is equally questionable to simply substitute words such as 'soul', 'spirit' and 'energy' and conclude that they provide a key to understanding complex and challenging psychological and psychiatric conditions.

The next speaker, Dr David McDonald, took an altogether more cautious and conventional approach. A consultant psychiatrist specialising in child mental health and a member of the Church of England Deliverance Study Group, he cited cases where an awareness of spiritual factors was an element in the successful resolution of mental disorders occurring in children and adolescents. These suggested a psychic element, including instances where someone had recklessly dabbled in occult practices or dallied with ouija boards and methods of channelling.

This fundamentally more cautious approach reflects the stance of the Church of England since the 1970s after an exorcism of a mentally ill man in Leeds in 1974 contributed to the brutal homicide of his wife in an insane frenzy (see **FT313:36-38**). Committed to a mental hospital for life, he was released after four years of conventional psychiatric treatment. The lesson learnt (or re-enforced) was that irresponsible exorcisms can inflict more harm and damage on patients than the condition they supposedly cure. (For a careful and sober discussion of issues, see *Deliverance: Psychic Disturbance and Occult Involvement*, 1996 + 2012, by Michael Perry).

The final session of the day was a talk by Dr Terence Palmer, who holds a degree in psychology from Canterbury Christ Church University and a master's degree in the study of mysticism and religious experience from Kent University. A hypnotherapist for 20 years and a spirit release practitioner for 12 years, he was the first person to receive a doctorate for research into spirit release therapy for his thesis, *A Revised Epistemology for an Understanding of Spirit Release Therapy in Accordance with the conceptual Framework of F.W.H. Myers*. He outlined a model for practical spirit release therapy which he explained had recently been applied in the case of an ex-serviceman who had suffered hearing voices for over 20 years, whom conventional psychiatric techniques had failed to relieve. This technique had produced an almost instantaneous cure. Details have not yet been published but a film record has been made of the process. He announced that a research project to further test this approach had been initiated, aiming to put the subject and its reputation onto a firmer scientific footing. In essence, his argument is that the efficacy of spirit release should be judged from the results, which can be objectively assessed.

Whatever view one takes of these topics, more research in this field to increase knowledge is undoubtedly welcome. Firstly, it is clear that current orthodox psychiatric and medical techniques do not provide solutions to many mental health conditions and even struggle to adequately define many of them (see *Introduction to Psychopathology,* 2000, by Alexandra Lemma). This is reflected by the unfortunate failure of standard clinical approaches in achieving measurable improvements for a substantial number of patients with symptoms.

Secondly, regardless of the resolutely materialist and secular stance of modern medicine, supernatural beliefs remain an infectious social reality. Such beliefs are increasingly appearing in cases examined not only in the psychiatric ward or clinic but also in the courtroom. In the 10 days after the conference, the following were all reported: an imprisoned 50-year-old devil worshipper committing suicide after his conviction for strangling his policeman lover; a schizophrenic Muslim teenager who fatally stabbed one person and slashed five others who told a psychiatrist someone had "put spirits in him"; and police reporting a "sharp rise in witchcraft used against children" in abuse cases. (*D.Mail, 6+7 Feb; D.Telegraph, 13 Feb 2017*). These are not isolated examples, and given such a context, it is hard to uphold simply dogmatic opposition to the prospect of a new line of therapeutic research (providing, of course that studies are conducted seriously, ethically and within recognised research parameters).

However, we should not imagine that paranormal experiences are a monopoly of the psychologically abnormal and those suffering mental illness. Any study should also recognise that the majority of psychic experiences are reported by people who are healthy, normal and balanced and often find them a positive feature in their lives. In this regard, positive experiences of psi effects in healthy humans and animals will also have much to tell us.

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MODERN IMPERIALISTS

Russian monarchists plan the Romanovs' return; German nationalists rewrite history.

ANTON BAKOV

ABOVE: Anton Bakov (l) and Prince Karl Emich of Leiningen (r) are planning to restore the pre-1917 Russian monarchy. **BELOW:** Neo-Nazi druid Burghard B. **FACING PAGE:** Peter Fitzek, self-proclaimed "King" of the Reich citizen movement, on trial for fraud in Germany.

ROMANOV EMPIRE RESTORED?

A Russian human rights activist is seeking to buy three uninhabited islands in the remote south Pacific nation of Kiribati to restore the Romanov Empire and create an "alternative Russia". Businessman Anton Alekseyevich Bakov, 51, a former Russian MP and founder of Russia's monarchist party, visited the tiny nation in late January after he was invited there to discuss his plan to purchase or lease three uninhabited islands – Malden, Starbuck and Caroline. He has proposed creating the capital of the new Russian nation on Malden Island, an empty coral atoll, where he says he plans to invest £280 million on resorts. Bakov, self-styled "Archchancellor of the Imperial Throne" wants Prince Karl Emich of Leiningen, a 64-year-old German great great grandson of Tsar Alexander II, to restore the monarchy overthrown in 1917 and accede as Tsar Nicholas III. (It might be relevant that Bakov was born and still lives in Yekaterinberg, where Nicholas II and his family were murdered.)

Visiting Kiribati with his wife Maria, who acted as an interpreter, Bakov said the idea for the restoration had the backing of a large number of Russians who were dissatisfied with Vladimir Putin. "This is the desire not only of the heir of the Russian throne but also a great number of Russian patriots who are not happy with Putin's regime and would like to have their revival of Romanov's empire visible – as an alternative Russia," he said.

Bakov plans to purchase three islands in remote Kiribati

Bakov has previously made attempts to restore the monarchy in the Cook Islands, a south Pacific country in free association with New Zealand, and in Montenegro – where he bought a 80ha (198-acre) plot of land "twice as big as the Vatican"; but the latest proposal is being seriously considered by authorities in Kiribati, a series of 33 coral atolls roughly halfway between Hawaii and Australia. The low-lying nation faces an uncertain future due to rising sea levels and has been seeking fresh sources of income, as well as potential places of refuge for some of its 107,000 citizens whose homes and livelihoods are under threat. Kiribati's government said its foreign investment commission was considering Bakov's proposal.

Former Kiribati president Teburoro Tito said the plan could bring much-needed investment and turn the nation into a remote island tourist attraction akin to the Maldives. Bakov is ambitious: "We are planning to construct air and sea ports, solar power stations, freshwater plants, hospitals, schools and settlements for the employees," he said. "The main economic objects of the islands will be eco-friendly hotels and fish processing plants. We would also develop tropical agriculture and Russian Imperial University." However, some academics are urging caution. Dr Sitiveni Halapua, a Pacific development specialist, told Radio New Zealand that he finds Bakov's plans "very strange" and "scary". Others have suggested Bakov's unstated aim is to create a tax haven. *BBC News, 30 Jan; D.Telegraph, 31 Jan; Guardian, 7 Feb 2017.*

GERMAN IMPERIAL CITIZENS

Meanwhile in Germany, there is a tiny but growing movement of "imperial citizens", which appears more sinister than Bakov's project. The so-called *Reichsbürger* are convinced that the Federal Republic of Germany doesn't exist. In its place the old German Empire endures, which in their telling was never properly abolished and persists in the borders of either 1871 or 1937. There are nearly as many lines of pseudo-legal reasoning as adherents. One rests on the

fact that the Allies never signed a peace treaty with Germany after World War II. Another cites selectively from a decision by Germany's supreme court in 1973 regarding an agreement between West and East Germany. The upshot, say *Reichsbürger*, is that the Federal Republic is really a limited-liability company based in Frankfurt and controlled by a Jewish world government based in America.

To the *Reichsbürger* the FRG's police, judges, laws and tax agencies thus have no authority, and its documents carry no weight. At a traffic stop, say, a *Reichsbürger* will overwhelm the (usually puzzled) police with references to phony legal paragraphs and treaties while producing a driver's licence or other identification issued by the Empire. The insignia vary because it is not clear even to the *Reichsbürger* who the true imperial government-in-waiting is. There are about 30 rival imperial chancellors, several princes and at least one king (see below). One of the chancellors, a man named Norbert Schittke, also claims the English throne.

Though they draw ridicule even from neo-Nazis, the *Reichsbürger* are considered part of the extreme right. Many (though not all) are racist and anti-immigrant. Most are male and live in rural areas. Of the four regions that monitor their numbers, Brandenburg and Thuringia, both in eastern Germany, have the most, with several hundred identified in each. Worried about a rise in incidents, a think-tank in Brandenburg recently published a handbook for bureaucrats dealing with *Reichsbürger*.

The best approach, it advises, is to avoid responding at all. Typically, a *Reichsbürger* will only deluge a bureaucracy with verbose letters studded with obscure citations. Others get aggressive. Some 20 interrupted a trial this year and tried to "arrest" the judge. The first case of armed violence occurred in October. Wolfgang P., a hunter in Bavaria, had outed himself as a *Reichsbürger* in the course of disobeying local authorities. When officers approached his house to confiscate his rifles, he opened fire from the upper floor, injuring several and killing one. Locals told the press that the 49-year-old was a loner raised by his grandmother, whose death had apparently unhinged him.

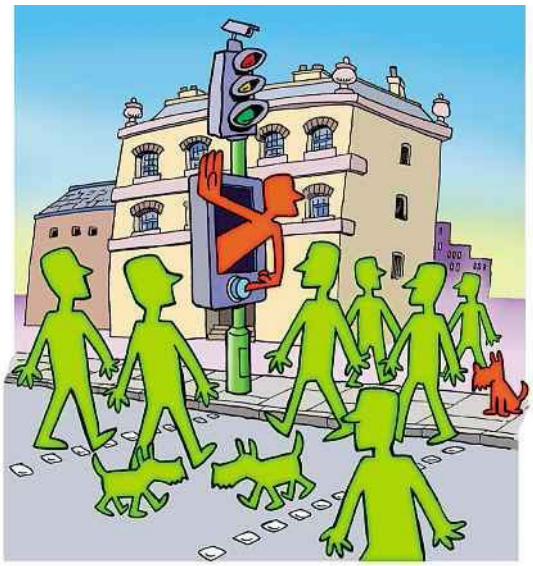
Peter Fitzek, a *Reichsbürger* who claimed to have set up the "Kingdom of New Germany" with himself as king, faced charges last October of embezzling 1.3 million euros from his "subjects", who had deposited money in accounts at his bank. In January, another prominent *Reichsbürger* was arrested for allegedly hoarding weapons. Burghard B, 65, a bearded neo-Nazi from Saxony-Anhalt, resembles Gandalf as he dresses as a druid, carrying a tribal spear. *Guardian, D.Telegraph, 22 Oct; Economist, 12 Nov 2016; Metro, 31 Jan 2017.*

JENS SCHLUETER / GETTY IMAGES

Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

210: PUSHING THE BUTTON



ILLUSTRATIONS: HUNT EMERSON

The myth

The button you push at a pedestrian crossing, to turn the little man from red to green, has no effect – it is a "placebo button", conning you into thinking that you control your destiny. Or, if you prefer: that button does indeed turn the little man green, and to believe otherwise is a paranoid delusion.

The "truth"

Well, how about that: it seems that both the conspiracy theorists *and* the sceptical debunkers are wrong. In Britain, some of the buttons work, some of them don't, and some of them sometimes do and sometimes don't. The basic idea is simple: traffic lights work on cycles which can be temporarily interrupted by pressing the pedestrian button to allow foot-traffic to cross busy roads. In many places, especially where there's no road junction involved, this is exactly what happens. At some crossings, the lights are uninfluenced by the pedestrian buttons, which exist for the sake of design consistency, and perhaps to discourage jaywalking (which is legal in GB, though not in Northern Ireland). At others, the button has an effect only between certain hours, usually at night when there is less traffic. There are also some sites, usually where walkers are trying to cross two roads at once, where it is actually *necessary* to press the button – otherwise the system will miss out the pedestrian stage of the cycle altogether. In other words, people who resolutely refuse to press the stupid buttons, because they're damned if they're going to be made mugs of, could literally be standing there waiting for the light to change for the rest of their lives.

Sources

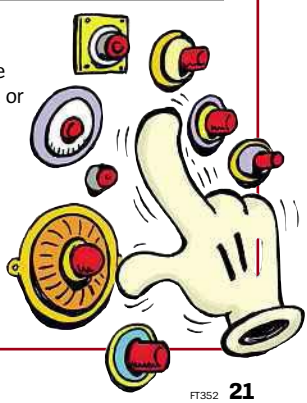
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-23869955;
http://www.traffic-signal-design.com/pedestrian_facilities.htm

Disclaimer

If you are privy to the Occult Knowledge of The Buttons, please feel free to condemn, correct or amplify our findings via FT's letters page.

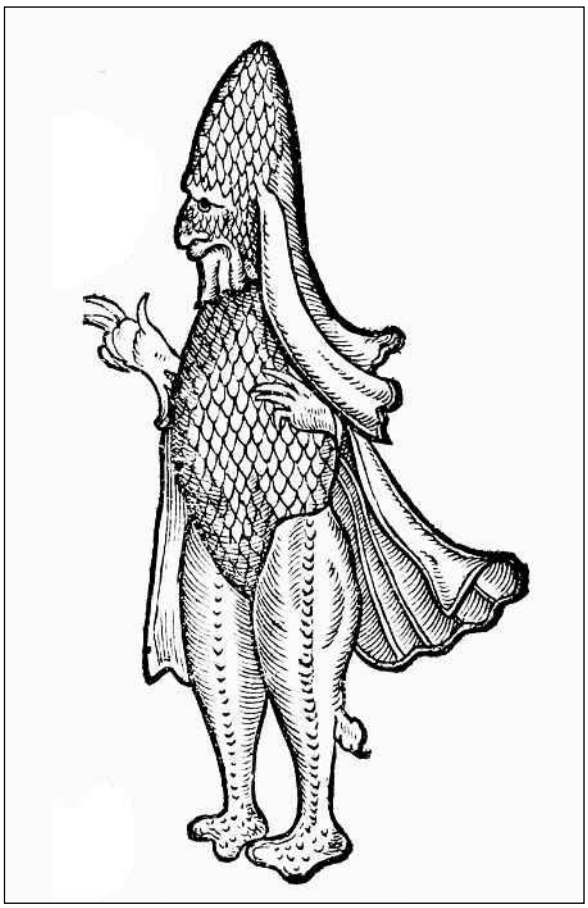
Mythchaser

The above raises an obvious question: which other buttons, which we are invited to press during our daily rounds, don't really do anything?



SOMETHING FISHY

Russian deep sea fisherman's catch includes creature plucked from the pages of a mediæval bestiary



ROMAN FEDORTSOV

ABOVE LEFT: The bishop fish or sea bishop was described in Gesner's *Historiæ animalium*. **ABOVE RIGHT**: The strange fish caught by Russian fisherman Roman Fedortsov last year.

This photograph of a fish resembling the bishop fish of mediæval bestiaries was published in the English-language *Moscow Times* last December. It was caught by Roman Fedortsov, a deep-sea fisherman based in Murmansk. In the 1990s Turkish fishermen caught a fish with ruddy pigmentation and vaguely humanoid features that bore a striking similarity to the old descriptions of bishop fish. According to marine folklore, the bishop fish or sea bishop is a large creature with a scaly, fish-shaped body, claw-like flippers and a large fin, which it can wrap around itself in a fashion that resembles a clergyman's cloak. Its skull, said to appear almost humanoid, bears an extended rough hewn brow, which reportedly resembles a bishop's mitre; hence the creature's name. There was a curious mediæval belief that every creature in the air or on the earth had its double in the sea.

The existence of bishop fish was first documented in 1433, when a specimen was found swimming in the Baltic. It was captured and given to the King of Poland, who was so taken by his new prize that he refused to return it to the sea. A group of Catholic bishops were granted an audience with the creature. The story goes that the fish gestured to the bishops, apparently communicating its desire to be released. The bishops urged the king to return it to its natural habitat, and eventually he agreed. Once set free, the grateful creature made the sign of the cross before plunging into the ocean depths.

In 1531 a bishop fish was caught off the German coast, but it refused to eat and died after three days. It was described and pictured in the fourth volume of Conrad Gesner's famous *Historiæ animalium* (1551-58). Later, a "strange looking fish" described as "a peaceful creature that appeared to have the mitre of a bishop" was caught in the Atlantic off the British coast. It perished soon afterward, and its corpse was returned to the sea.

Scholars were always sceptical of this strange fish. Guillaume Rondelet, for example, who included a picture of a bishop fish in his *Libri de piscibus marinis* (1554-55), stated: "I think that certain details beyond the truth of the matter have been added by the painter to make the thing seem more marvellous." Some researchers believe that the bishop fish may be a kind of deformed manta ray, whose features bear some slight semblance to those of a man. Those who subscribe to this theory claim that a ray's "wings" could create the illusion of the cape-like appendage attributed to these creatures. The debate continues whether bishop fish are some kind of anomalous variety of known marine life or an altogether new species. *Cryptopia, 15 Dec 2009; gizmodo.com, 20 Dec 2016.*

A–Z ALIEN ZOO

KARL SHUKER presents his regular round-up from the cryptozoological garden

UIC SCIENCE

FAN PENGFEI

ABOVE LEFT: The huge skull nicknamed 'The Old One' (left), with modern polar bear skulls at right. **ABOVE RIGHT**: The newly-discovered but already endangered Skywalker hoolock gibbon. **BELOW**: This previously undescribed species of opossum was first found as a museum specimen before being tracked down alive and well in Brazil.

A WEASEL BEAR'S SKULL?

According to the traditional legends and lore of native hunters in Arctic Canada, in addition to the normal polar bear there is a very special variety that is much bigger, but narrow-bodied, and fleeter-footed. They call it the *tiriarnaq* or *tigiaqpak*, names that translate as the weasel bear, on account of its lithe build and speedy pace. Although scientists working in this region have known about the local hunters' belief in the weasel bear, they always dismissed it as mythical – until the recent public revelation that in 2014 a discovery was made here of a very unusual zoological specimen that may just conceivably represent tangible evidence for the weasel bear's reality. Approximately 650-800 years old and thus earning for its erstwhile owner the nickname 'The Old One', the specimen was recovered from an eroding archæological site southwest of Utqiagvik, Alaska. It consisted of an exceptionally large, fully intact, but very odd-shaped polar bear skull, noticeably different from modern polar bear skulls. Despite its huge size, it was slender, elongated at the rear end, and exhibited unusual structural features around the nasal area and elsewhere. The significance of its distinctive appearance will require genetic and detailed morphological analyses before any answers are forthcoming. As noted by Anne Jensen, an Utqiagvik-based archæologist working for the science department of the Native village corporation UIC (Ukpeagvik Iñupiat Corp.) who has been leading excavation and research programmes in the region, 'The Old One' may have belonged to a subspecies, or a different genetic 'race', of polar bear – or was possibly something else entirely. In view of its skull's narrow form, might this "something else entirely" have been the legendary weasel bear?

www.adn.com/arctic/2017/02/19/could-a-giant-polar-bear-skull-found-at-an-eroding-alaska-archaeological-site-be-the-legendary-weasel-bear/ 21 Feb 2017.

A FUNKY NEW GIBBON

It's not every day that a new species of ape is scientifically described and named. Dubbed the Skywalker hoolock gibbon (yes, its discoverers are *Star Wars* fans), but known formally as *Hoolock tianxing*, this brown-furred, white-eyebrowed denizen of rainforests within Gaoligongshan nature reserve in southwestern China's Yunnan province had been the subject of primatological studies for some time. However, it had not been recognised as a species in its own right, taxonomically separate from both of the two previously recognised hoolock species, until a research team led by Fan Peng-Fei from China's Sun Yat-sen University began to suspect that subtle differences in its facial markings might indicate this. Their suspicions were confirmed when comparative genetic and morphological analyses with other gibbon species were conducted. Also existing in neighbouring Myanmar, this newly revealed species is apparently represented by no more than around 200 individuals, so it should be officially categorised as endangered, especially as its continuing existence is already threatened by habitat loss.

www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jan/11/new-species-of-gibbon-discovered-in-china 11 Jan 2017; http://www.sci-news.com/biology/new-species-skywalker-hoolock-gibbon-04533.html 13 Jan 2017.

A MAGICAL MARSUPIAL

Another unexpected mammalian discovery made recently is one that occurred not in a rainforest but inside a museum. In 2008, while browsing in the collections of the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi in Belém, Brazil, postgraduate biology student Silvia Pavan was intrigued by an unidentified rat-sized opossum skin with noticeably rich mahogany-coloured fur and a red head. She sought further specimens in other museums and discovered several, none of which had been formally identified either. Some of her colleagues then travelled to the source of these specimens – Itaituba I National Forest in Pará, Brazil – and succeeded in capturing some living individuals using a series of humane pitfall traps.

After subjecting these examples to a full study, Pavan and her colleagues confirmed that they represented a hitherto-undescribed species of short-tailed opossum, which they have now officially named the gnome opossum *Monodelphis saci* – the saci being a magical gnome-like entity from Brazilian folklore that wears a red cap, and which this new red-headed opossum brought to mind. Ironically, it appears to be widely distributed in four different Brazilian states, despite its very existence having been recognised by science so belatedly.

http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/02/gnome-marsupial-new-species-brazil/ 23 Feb 2017.

AO MACIEL

NECROLOG

This month, we say goodbye to an alumnus of *Saturday Night Live* who suffered from a rare delusional syndrome and record the lonely end of a nudist hermit and herbalist.

NBCU PHOTO BANK / GETTY IMAGES

TONY ROSATO

Actor Tony Rosato is the only famous person I've ever heard of to have suffered from Capgras Delusion, the so-called Imposter Syndrome [**FT123:14, 133:16, 145:17** and p56-57 this issue]. When the syndrome is mentioned, the immediate response is to think of the movie *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, based on a Jack Finney novel. Finney, explaining the book's origin in Stephen King's *Danse Macabre*, makes no mention of being familiar with the real delusion, but he might well have heard about it from a budding medical student during his days at Knox College in Galesburg in the Thirties. The syndrome also finds echoes in Shirley Jackson's story "The Beautiful Stranger" and, later, Charles Beaumont's *Twilight Zone* script "Person or Persons Unknown". Capgras Syndrome is believed to have a biological basis, such as a lesion on the brain, possibly caused by some injury.

Rosato is best remembered in his adopted homeland of Canada, where he appeared on the cop show *Night Heat* for four years in the late Eighties, winning a Gemini Award. Before that, he was one of a handful of actors to appear on both of the USA's top satirical shows of the Eighties, *SCTV* and *Saturday Night Live (SNL)*. He had two memorable roles on Michael O'Donoghue's notorious Hallowe'en episode of *SNL*, which introduced punk rock to Middle America via the band Fear. Since *SNL* was in ratings doldrums during Rosato's tenure, it is likely that the actor reached his widest audience with his video game-related voiceovers, providing the voice of Luigi in the cartoon shows *The Adventures of Super Mario Bros 3* and *Super Mario World* and a couple of characters in the *Resident Evil 3* game. He did voices for a few dozen cartoon shows, including those spun off from movies like *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* and *Free Willy*.

Rosato's life took a bizarre turn in 2005, when he was arrested after stalking his wife Leah and their infant daughter. He had previously contacted the police to claim that his wife and daughter had been replaced by imposters. In some instances the Capgras sufferer turns hostile or violent towards the person he believes to be an imposter. Such was the case with Rosato. Though obviously suffering from mental illness, he was sent to Quinte Detention Centre in Napanee for two years, a judgement which Daniel Brodsky described as the longest ever given for criminal harassment in Canada. It is hard to imagine the toll that the trauma of living in prison would take on one who is suffering from such a mental illness, and it is hard to regard the sentence as anything other than cruel.

Rosato was confined to a psychiatric hospital for 19 months, and released in 2010. Happily, his condition seems to have improved, thanks to anti-psychotic medication. After his release he was reunited with his wife and continued to work in obscure TV and movie roles. He died of a heart attack.

Antonio Rosato, actor and Capgras sufferer, born Naples, Italy 26 Dec 1954; died Toronto, Ontario 10 Jan 2017, aged 62.

Brett Taylor

PETER O'NEILL

The body of Peter O'Neill (if that was his real name) was found in his remote dwelling in the Glenmalure Hills of Co Wicklow, Ireland, on 8 May 2015 after a local hotel reported he had not come to collect his post in a while. The hermit, who spoke with an English accent, had lived alone in the Wicklow Mountains for more than 20 years. He had built a hut where an old ruin once existed in the middle of the forest. "He was a wild-looking character but he was clean-shaven, his hair was as if he cut it himself," said retired Garda Richard Galvin. "He complained he had been hunted out of everywhere." He was a keen herbalist, and spent much of his time naked. He had been dead for several months; his last diary entry was for 18 January. He left behind hundreds of letters and books, all accompanied by complex notes, suggesting he was attempting to find some common thread. "He had questions of a religious nature that he was trying to suss out," said Fr Oliver Crotty, a local parish priest. "I was amazed at the sheer scale of his knowledge. There are 37 other such men living in forests around Ireland. Maybe they're telling us something very profound about the need to be in touch with our environment." We are reminded of the Dark Age pillar saints of the desert.

Peter O'Neill, nudist hermit, born c. 1945; died Wicklow mountains, c. Jan 2015, aged about 71.

JAMES CRONIN

Cronin shared the 1980 Nobel Prize in Physics with Val Fitch, for demonstrating that there was a flaw in the central belief held by scientists almost since the time of Galileo: that the laws of physics are immutable. In the early 1960s Cronin and Fitch investigated unstable subatomic particles called kaons (or K mesons). These have a lifetime of only fractions of a second, but during that life they oscillate rapidly between kaons and their antimatter counterpart, antikaons. Conventional wisdom predicted that they would undergo the same number of transitions in each direction, but in fact the transition from antikaon to kaon occurred about half a per cent less frequently, thus violating CP symmetry, a principle that states that the laws of physics should be the same if a particle is interchanged with its antiparticle. Thus after the (hypothetical) Big Bang, antimatter decayed more rapidly than matter, leaving behind the matter that constitutes the Universe rather than an infinite void. Hallelujah!

James Watson Cronin, physicist, born Chicago 29 Sept 1931; died St Paul, MN 25 Aug 2016, aged 84.

JOSEPH B KELLER

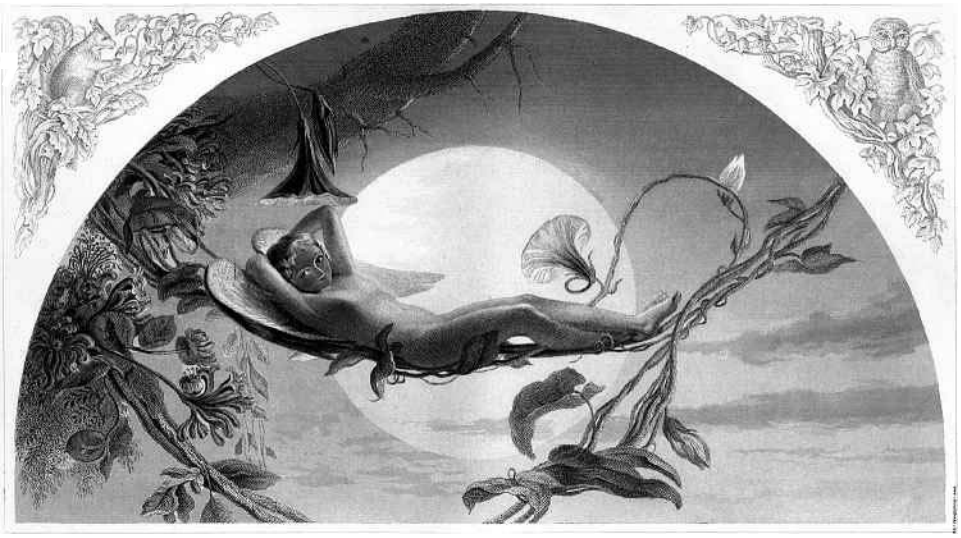
Joe Keller, Professor Emeritus of Mathematics and Mechanical Engineering at Stanford, developed mathematical formulæ to explain a wide range of contingencies, from the esoteric to the mundane. He was best known for his Geometrical Theory of Diffraction, a method for describing the propagation, scattering and diffraction of waves, especially as they bend around the edges and corners of an obstacle. The theory built on work he had done during and after World War II using

sonar to determine the presence and location of submarines and underwater land mines. He developed and used a mathematical method of approximation known as "asymptotic analysis" to tackle problems that cannot be solved exactly, and applied it to predict behaviour throughout the domains of science. He figured out how to make a teapot spout that doesn't drip, for which he was awarded the Ig Nobel prize for Physics in 1999; he won a second Ig Nobel in 2012 for identifying the physical forces that make a jogger's ponytail swing horizontally even though the jogger is oscillating vertically. He also worked out how earthworms (but not snakes) can wriggle even on glass. *Joseph Bishop Keller, mathematician, born Paterson, NJ 31 July 1923; died Palo Alto CA 7 Sept 2016, aged 93*.

WHITNEY SMITH

Whitney Smith turned a childhood fascination with flags into a scholarly discipline of which he was the leading light. Aged 18, he gave it a name: vexillology, from the Latin for flag, *vexillum*. "Some of the kids thought I was weird," he told *People* magazine in 1985. "But to be 13 years old and literally the only person in the Western world who knew what the flag of Bhutan looked like, well, this was my world." As a political science undergraduate at Harvard, he designed a flag for newly independent Guyana. In 1961, with Gerhard Grahl, he created the bimonthly *Flag Bulletin*, the first journal of its kind. A year later he founded the Flag Research Center, a consulting firm that answered inquiries from filmmakers, historians and commercial flag makers.

He wrote the standard work, *Flags Through the Ages and Across the World* (1975), and 26 other books on the subject. In 2011, the editors of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* noted that he was their most prolific contributor, having written more than 250 flag histories. Flags of a kind date back at least 5,000 years; Smith liked to cite an ancient Iranian one, made from copper. However, he argued that their modern significance started with the 16th century Dutch revolt against Spain. For the first time it was not a state or monarch being symbolised, but a people, a language, a culture and a cause. *Whitney Smith Jr, vexillologist, born Arlington, MA 26 Feb 1940; died Peabody, MA 17 Nov 2016, aged 76*.



FAIRIES, FOLKLORE AND FORTEANA

SIMON YOUNG FILES A NEW REPORT FROM THE INTERFACE OF STRANGE PHENOMENA AND FOLK BELIEF

LEPRECHAUN HUNTS

It is April 1908. We are in County Down, Ireland, in the townland of Killough and groups of boys are hunting for a leprechaun. The story first broke in the newspapers around 20 April, and by then several locals had seen the "man of dwarfish proportions... clad in red, with a small peaked cap" and this curious being had caused 'the greatest excitement'. The excitement was not just about an encounter with the paranormal, but also depended on baser motives: leprechauns, of course, give up their treasure if captured.

Now there are, as it happens, several cases where groups of boys have gone leprechaun mad and torn up an area looking for diminutive shoe makers: one in 1938 from West Limerick and another from Liverpool in 1964 [see **FT299:26-32**] – the last case possibly explained by Liverpool's Irish roots.

In itself, then, a leprechaun hunt in 1908 in County Down is not that surprising. But some of the twists that followed are absolutely unique. For one thing, the leprechaun hunters kept at it. Twenty days later a journalist wrote: "This week the little creature is reported to have made several appearances in the district, and these are much believed by the people... On one occasion some of the children pursued it to a moat hard by a churchyard, where it disappeared." On another occasion the leprechaun was spotted dressed, for once, in white and sitting under a hedge playing a tiny harp.

> THE LEPRECHAUN WAS SPOTTED SITTING UNDER A HEDGE PLAYING A TINY HARP

Second, and most disturbingly, the leprechaun was caught. On 12 August two policemen were summoned to a farmhouse at nearby Mullingar in West Meath, for a small and ravenous man had been discovered there. The 'leprechaun', who could not speak, was escorted to the workhouse, where he was treated "with interest mixed with awe" and children besieged the building desperate to catch a glimpse.

Third, the press went mad. British newspapers sent their agents to try and get a photograph of the little man and GK Chesterton wrote a lyrical piece for the *Illustrated London News*. At least the press went mad until it was discovered that the 'leprechaun' was mentally ill and all too human. He had left home in early August, two months after the leprechaun hunt had begun and he wasn't even, it transpired, that small. The 'leprechaun' was sold by his father for £10 to a freakshow in Glasgow and the story sank into local folklore. The fairyist Evans-Wentz found the countryside alive with leprechaun rumours when he passed through at the end of the summer. One sceptical newspaper ventured that the leprechaun was nothing more than a spotted badger, the propensity for that creature to sit under hedges and play harps being well known...

Simon Young writes on folklore and history and runs www.fairyist.com

the UFO files

FORTEAN TIMES presents our monthly section featuring regular sighting reports, reviews of classic cases, entries on major ufological topics and hands-on advice for UFO investigators. **The UFO Files** will benefit from your input, so don't hesitate to submit your suggestions and questions.

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FLYINGSAUCERY

PETER BROOKESMITH PRESENTS HIS REGULAR SURVEY OF THE LATEST FADS AND FLAPS FROM THE WORLD OF UFOLOGY

THERE IS NO SENSE IN TRYING

"…but it's all right, Ma – I'm only dying…" Ufology has a way of killing off some, even if not all, of its brighter stars, who make fine contributions to the subject and ere long depart in disgust. So the field is left with a collection of halfwits and buffoons who loudly lay claim to the Truth, but who curiously enough fail to agree on almost everything except that *the aliens are here*, and some of them come from Zeta Reticuli. Should you doubt my words, read Robert Sheaffer's Bad UFOs blog reports on the 2017 International UFO Congress in Fountain Hills, Arizona. Part of his bad news is that the bar was intolerably expensive. Otherwise the gathering was treated to a collection of mostly has-beens churning out the same old stuff they've been peddling for years, decades in some cases. And bats they mostly are. (Comparisons with noble members of the House of Lords should be stoutly resisted.) Those attending were treated among other things to Col Charles Halt doing his Walter Mittyish *shtick* over Rendlesham, Stan Friedman remorselessly oblivious to the debunking of the Fish star model (see **FT242:50-52**), someone else unmoved by all rational (and conclusively provable) explanations of the Phoenix lights of 1997, and one Ted Roe, who in the course of a self-regarding discourse remarked that in ufology one must restrain those who "start attacking peoples' image".

This is a bit rich coming from Roe, who late last year expended much energy dissing Isaac Koi for operating under a pseudonym, and threatening to expose his real identity. (Roe now denies doing any such thing, guffaw, and went on to accuse Koi of lacking integrity.) In early December an understandably upset Isaac released this statement:

"Goodbye: I seem to have greatly annoyed Ted Roe about a month ago when I posted a brief comment on Facebook about his new IAUPR group. Without wanting to bother you all with the details, he has subsequently posted on various Facebook pages attacking my use of a pseudonym (referring to me as a 'fictional entity', 'it' and posting 'Who the f—k is Isaac Koi and why won't he comply w the standards we do?'). …

"Even more worryingly to me, given my concern not to have clients know about my interest in ufology in case this adversely affects my income, he has now posted today – after various people were kind enough to support me in the relevant discussion on Facebook (including Edoardo Russo, Curt Collins, Rich Hoffman, Paul Dean and others) – called those supporting me 'little butt sucking followers' and said 'just watch how I make these malcontents famous anytime someone searches their name'."

Charming. Isaac posted a 100-odd page document on his Facebook page and the Above Top Secret (ATS) website with all the grisly details you might require. For those short of time, I commend Curt Collins's summary of the byzantine background to the case on his excellent website (www.blueblurrylines.com/2016/12/erica-lukes-ted-roe-and-attack-on-isaac.html). One of the pivotal arguments in this infantile *brouhaha* was over that famous German 1950 April Fools' joke (for another from the same year, see p37), the photo of a little alien held by two betrilbyed B-movie G-men in trench coats, (below) which someone had whimsically identified as coming from "the Cape Girardeau, Missouri, UFO crash on April 12, 1941". The original of this doctored picture has long since been found, by the way.

Isaac's great strength has been his sedulous persistence in tracking down and putting online archaic ufological newsletters, journals and magazines, all with copyright clearance, for all to view for free. Now, some may think this a trifle nerdy, a facet of the philatelic tendency in the field, and that his concern that knowledge of his interest might adversely affect his appeal as a barrister is a little overwrought. We don't, for instance, recall that Harry Harris, Mancunian solicitor and egregious devotee of our dreadful libel laws, ever suffered from his promotion of questionable abduction cases. So Isaac's (in)voluntary retirement is a loss, especially to those of us who might not, without his efforts, have been able to appreciate, for example, what a brilliant production *UFO Brigantia* was – ufology as comedy, indeed. If ufology is to survive – if only *as* comedy – it needs young guns to succeed the kind of superannuated sclerotics who appeared in Arizona. Isaac was one such new kid in town, doing something worthwhile, and he will be much missed. He is survived by his website, and his many posts on ATS.

SURPRISING SILENCE

I had thought that the discovery of TRAPPIST-1, a dim star 40 million light years away, with no less than seven rocky Earth-like planets circling it, one of which seems to be a fine candidate for nurturing life in some form, would have the ETHers squeaking with joy, and proclaiming it 'proof' of their ill-founded beliefs. But one finds not a peep from the usual suspects. I doubt this silence has much to do with a sudden access of knowledge or wisdom, so must be content with finding it odd, if mildly encouraging.

UFO CASEBOOK

JENNY RANDLES SUGGESTS IT'S TIME WE LOOKED AT THAT 'FIVE PER CENT' OF UNSOLVED UFO CASES

PROJECT FIVE PER CENT

Early in January 2017 I received a UFO report from my small Stockport community. A middle-aged woman was awoken in the early hours by a strange noise – a deep humming mixed with a faint whirring – and a glowing light illuminating her bedroom. Looking outside, she could see that the object creating the glow – and, she inferred, the sound – was hidden behind trees to the south, as if "something eerie" had landed. So far, so intriguing; but my suspicions grew as her story unfolded and she noted that she returned to bed, wishing it away, and the next thing she knew (I suspect after falling back to sleep) both light and sound had disappeared.

Over the 45 years that I have investigated UFO cases I have heard many accounts like this, and while I might have a possible solution for many, some remain unsolved mysteries that can easily grow into legends. Here, that was not the case, because I quickly realised what the witness had seen. I knew this because I had seen and heard it myself, but had been merely miffed because it woke me up. I had discovered its cause because I lived much nearer to the source than she did: right next to the main line railway. The 'UFO', out of sight in a cutting, was a group of engineers working on the track overnight. They were using a large arc light with a generator that emitted a hum as described.

Although this case isn't Earth-shattering, it does reveal the social factors and pure luck that can make the difference between a strange encounter being interpreted in a supernatural context or being resolved. Nobody who investigates fortean phenomena should ignore what this means.

Ninety-five per cent of reports of something 'weird' are nothing of the kind: they are normal events filtered through some quirk of circumstance that makes them seem stranger than they really were. But they can grow into something that enters the personal 'folklore' of a witness's life to the extent that they retell the story over and over again. If, as is frequently the case, the witness never gets an answer, they go on to believe for the rest of their days that they have joined the ranks of those who have briefly touched the unfathomable. I suspect this is a template for how nearly all strange experiences evolve. That 95 per cent of such experiences do have resolution – of a kind that the sincerely bemused witnesses making up the remaining five per cent didn't find – should set alarm bells ringing, yet it very rarely does. It leaves an unspoken question that researchers tend to evade, as if it's a terrible secret that must be kept lest it destroy their dreams: how do we know for sure that there really *are* five per cent of cases that are *not* like the other 95 per cent? What if all those UFO cases are just the ones that got away in terms of finding resolution? The ones in which there was no lucky break allowing us to unpick the real cause? Are we right to say that five per cent of 'unknowns' will forever defy resolution? If not, then we stand on shifting sands.

Venus was close to Earth and bright in the winter sky

Over the years I have seen this happen in too many otherwise baffling cases to dismiss the argument, even if – we tell ourselves – there really are some truly insoluble cases. It seems less disastrous to a fortean researcher, because the phenomenon itself and how society has then been changed by it is our focus: any cause is almost secondary. But many ufologists have a deep need to uncover some extraordinary cause for at least a few of the events they investigate. It's worth pondering how this influences the dissemination and understanding of evidence, as investigator bias, albeit unconscious, can be insidious.

Dozens of UFO sightings were made during January 2017 of a huge 'starship' hovering in the south-western sky. The witnesses were not deluded, but were watching the spectacular sight of Venus, close to Earth and exceptionally bright in the winter skies, as pictured above; and in the case of those with less than 20/20 vision they saw artefacts created by their eyes that made it mimic a structured craft. Countless sightings result when we are caught unawares by changes in the night sky. We rarely understand how shapes and movements are the result of our less than perfect eyesight, not the 'craft' we think we are seeing.

Numerous classic and widely promoted cases have resulted from trained observers unaware of a natural event in the skies. The wave of 'Flying Crosses' that baffled many police forces in the 1960s and filled the national press is one example. There were no crosses in the sky: they were artefacts created in the human eye.

Sometimes witnesses develop the narrative of what they saw into an art form. I recall an excited witness who described a spectacular space vehicle he had witnessed. It was years ago, but stuck in his memory after he described it, over and over, to others as he added various features of the UFO 'propulsion system'. It was pure chance that this didn't become another classic encounter in our bulging files, because I had followed up other sightings of the same thing. This witness had really seen a spectacular burn-up in the upper atmosphere when a piece of space junk in decaying orbit disintegrated. He did not know this and his understandable certainty that he had seen a 'spaceship' (which ironically he had!) meant he followed the path of unintentionally evolving his account into more than the sum of its parts.

One close encounter that I investigated makes this point well. On 21 October 1983, a couple had been visiting their son in Shropshire before driving back to Cheshire. Around midnight, they saw a 'UFO' swoop towards their car and engage in a game of cat and mouse, hugging the hedgerows. For about 50 minutes the terror of this encounter escalated as they were followed northwards. The UFO beamed a light at them, but cast no shadow. Both witnesses were scared and upset. One even suffered hypertension afterwards. The man was a skilled engineer and both were 100 per cent sincere in describing what they saw to Jodrell Bank space centre, which passed them on to me.

The object this couple described was a classic UFO with multiple lights. It could easily have become an impressive case had I not suspected what they had seen and asked them: *Did you see the Moon?* Surprised, they said the night appeared moonlit, but they had seen no Moon. Yet the Moon was almost full, and given the weather and the route taken should have been spectacularly visible. If you put two and two together you can make either a UFO or a baffling misperception of the Moon. The witnesses were sure it was the former. I am more cautious, because I know that amazing things can be seen by experienced witnesses; if they are thinking 'UFO' rather than 'Moon', then that is what they will see.

So did this UFO become an IFO? How many more of our unresolved five per cent sit in this ambiguous borderland, simply waiting for the right resolution? Perhaps we need a new study into the 'Ones that Got Away' to find out. I propose that we put together a team of analysts with a range of expertise to explore a few of these most baffling cases. We have new assets – such as the power and resources of the Internet and the ability to instantly exchange ideas online. Perhaps we can dig deeper into the five per cent and apply new knowledge and modern resources to currently unsolved cases. We should focus on multiple witness events and define a Strangeness Factor based on researchable evidence that helps us choose the best candidates to reinvestigate. If you think you can help such a "Project five per cent" then send an email to nufon@btinternet.com and volunteer. Perhaps in a future issue we can report our first conclusions.

FORTFOOLERY

FORTEANA & APRIL FOOL HOAXES

While gathering in this year's spaghetti harvest, **ROB GANDY** was struck by the fact that a significant number of April Fool pranks over the decades have featured fortean themes – from fake UFOs to cryptozoological creatures – in their attempts to put one over on the public...

On 1 April each year people everywhere play simple tricks on family and friends so they can shout "April Fool!" This has been handed down the generations, with children often encouraged by one parent to hoodwink the other with statements like "Look Mum there's a flying saucer in the garden!" But how did this tradition begin?

April Fools' Day, or All Fools' Day, has been celebrated for centuries by different cultures, but its exact origins are a mystery. Some historians speculate that it dates to 1582, when France switched from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar (see **FT**:**:****): people who were slow or failed to recognise New Year had moved to 1 January, and continued to celebrate it from 25 March to 1 April, became the butt of jokes and hoaxes. Others link it to *Hilaria*, an ancient Roman festival celebrated at the end of March, which involved people dressing up in disguises. Whatever the truth, April Fools' Day was celebrated throughout Britain from the 18th century.[1] Increasingly, over the 20th century, the popular media tested people's credulity with April Fools' Day hoaxes ranging from the subtle to the outlandish; many were bought hook, line and sinker. Some reflected contemporary culture, but others involved strange creatures and scientific discoveries.

I found myself wondering what proportion of April Fools' pranks involved fortean themes. Some lazy armchair research identified the excellent *Museum of Hoaxes* website,[2] which details "Wonderful stories contrived for the public from ancient times to the present day", and lists "The Top 100 April Fool's Day Hoaxes of All Time". I analysed this list using "soft and slow" – as opposed to "hard and fast" – fortean categorisation and provide my analysis and some specifics below.

The range of hoaxes is wide, and includes non-fortean japes such as no-hole polo mints, the division of Belgium, and viagra for hamsters. They also include a 1983 video of a Boston University professor (apparently) revealing the fourth century origin of April Fool's Day, and a summary of the oldest known prank: sending people to see lions washed in the Tower of London's moat (1698). But I found 38 fortean-related hoaxes, which I categorised into: Cryptozoology (9); Science (13); UFOs/Space (4); Psychology (5); and Miscellaneous (7); see panel.

THINKGEEK

ALL FOOLS DAY HAS BEEN CELEBRATED FOR CENTURIES

CRYPTOZOOLOGY HOAXES

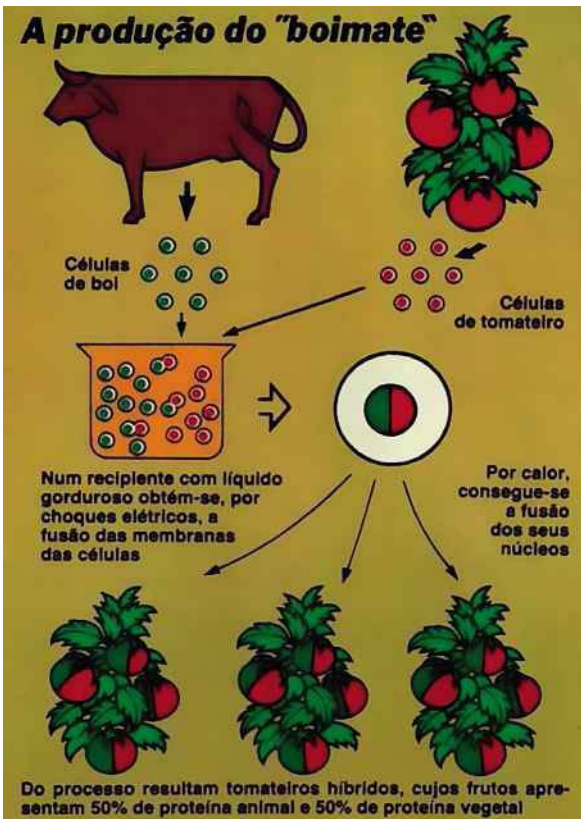
The highest ranked case involved zoologists from Yorkshire's Flamingo Park Zoo finding the dead body of the Loch Ness Monster. Scottish police intercepted them taking

KEYSTONE / HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: 1) The harvesting of spaghetti from a 'vine' on the ceiling of Lo Spiedo, an Italian restaurant in central London, in 1961. 2) The hotheaded naked ice borer, as reported in *Discover* magazine in 1995. 3) Richard Branson's 'UFO' balloon sparked sightings across London in 1989. 4) An Easter Island statue washes up on a beach in the Netherlands in 1962. 5) The capture of an extra-terrestrial visitor following a Roswell-style saucer crash in Wiesbaden, Germany, in 1950.

Nessie's corpse back to Yorkshire, but found the creature was a large bull elephant seal that had died a week earlier in Dudley Zoo. Flamingo Park's education officer, John Shields, had shaved its whiskers, padded its cheeks with stones, and kept it frozen, before sneakily dumping it in the Loch, intended as an April Fool's prank on his colleagues. He admitted the joke had got a little out of hand.[3]

Everyone knows about unicorns, but two hoaxes focused on how to eat them. In 2010 retailer ThinkGeek announced the sale of canned unicorn meat, as "the new white meat"; the concept proved popular enough for the company to later sell the product 'for real': customers received a stuffed unicorn toy inside a can. However, customers in Germany didn't receive their orders because customs officials apparently believed unicorns *were* real and decided the product breached regulations banning the importation of meat from


A produção do "boimate"
Células de boi
Células de tomateiro
Num recipiente com líquido gorduroso obtém-se, por choques elétricos, a fusão das membranas das células
Por calor, consegue-se a fusão dos seus núcleos
Do processo resultam tomateiros híbridos, cujos frutos apresentam 50% de proteína animal e 50% de proteína vegetal

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: 1) The endangered Tasmanian mock walrus (1984). 2) The BBC's flying penguins (2008). 3) How to cook a unicorn, courtesy of a fake mediæval manuscript from the British Library (2012). 4) Beef tomatoes? In 1983, a *New Scientist* article, by MacDonald and Wimpey of the University of Hamburg, discussed a new "plant-animal hybrid" called Boimate. 5) In 1962, Swedish viewers were told that stretching an old stocking over their black-and-white tellies would result in colour pictures.

'rare' animals. In 2012, the British Library announced the discovery of a long-lost mediæval cookbook in its archives, which featured a recipe for cooking a unicorn, including instructions for a marinade and griddle-roasting. The library reproduced hand-drawn illustrations.

A literal White Elephant, supposedly from Burma, attracted over 1,000 people to Frankfurt Zoo in 1949, but it was just a regular grey elephant painted white. The zoo's director was forgiven for this genuine attempt to raise much-needed cash. A more *Jurassic Park*-style stunt involved an article about "Retrobreeding the Woolly Mammoth" in MIT's *Technology Review*, which described Soviet scientists' efforts to bring the creature back from extinction.

Antarctica is the source of two more crypto-hoaxes: *Discover* magazine reported a new species – the hotheaded naked ice borer – with bony plates on their heads which can become burning hot, because of innumerable blood vessels. This allows them to bore through ice at high speeds, or melt ice beneath penguins, causing the unfortunate birds to sink beneath the surface where the hotheads would eat them. However, penguins from Terry Jones's colony of Adélie penguins would simply take to the air – as filmed by the BBC. [4] Rather than endure Antarctic winters, these amazing penguins fly thousands of miles to South American rainforests to bask in the tropical Sun.

The remaining two hoaxes involve unheard of animals with peculiar characteristics or powers. Telecommunications company Qualcomm suggested expanding wireless coverage by implanting tiny base-stations into pigeons hybridised with wolves (wolf-pigeons). They could fly overhead but simultaneously defend themselves, forming packs when necessary, whilst going out as "lone wolves" to areas without coverage. By comparison, the Tasmanian mock walrus was four inches long, looked like a walrus, purred like a cat, and had a hamster's temperament. It never bathed or used a litter box, but it ate cockroaches, potentially ridding an entire house of its roach problem.

SCIENCE HOAXES

Scientific breakthroughs evoke a sense of wonder, and are therefore favourites for pranksters. No surprise then that many believed the following. In Sweden, viewers were persuaded that by pulling a nylon stocking over their black & white TV screen, the mesh would cause light to bend in such a way that the image would appear as if in colour. BBC TV broadcast an interview with a London University professor who had perfected a technology called *Smellovision*, which allowed the transmission of smells over the airwaves.

Then there was the man who could fly using a device powered only by the breath from his lungs, or the terrifying new weapon invented by Soviet scientists capable of "harnessing the latent energy of the atmosphere" to hurl objects of any weight almost unlimited distances. Another unlikely discovery was "contra-polar energy", negative energy that caused electrical devices to produce the opposite effect to what they normally would do: for example, the bulb of an ordinary lamp would cast darkness instead of light.

Other scientific gems were: thousands of "rogue bras" where the support wire was made from a kind of copper originally designed for use in fire alarms – when it came into contact with nylon and body heat, it produced static electricity which interfered with local television and radio broadcasts; British scientists who had developed a machine to control the weather within a 5,000-km radius; a car sunroof that could be kept open in the rain because jets of air blasted the water away from the top of the car; a *Veterinary Record* article about diseases afflicting the species *Brunus edwardii* (otherwise known as the "Teddy Bear") [5]; Thomas Edison invented a machine transforming soil directly into cereal and water directly into wine, thereby ending world hunger; a *New Scientist* article, by researchers MacDonald and Wimpey of the University of Hamburg, about a successful "plant-animal hybrid" called *Boimate*, which had resulted in tomatoes containing genes from a cow; in Germany, a farmer could obtain lard from live pigs by operating on them (using novocaine) to remove rashers, before bandaging them and letting them heal, a process that could be repeated up to three times a year; and genetically modified "whistling carrots" which grow with tapered airholes in their sides, so that when fully cooked, they emited a "97 decibel signal" indicating they should be removed from the stove.

UFO/SPACE HOAXES

The top-ranking UFO/Space hoax involved British astronomer Patrick Moore, [6] who on 1 April 1976 announced that at 9:47am that day a once-in-a-lifetime planetary alignment would occur which would temporarily counteract and lessen Earth's own gravity. Moore told radio listeners that if they jumped in the air at the exact moment the alignment occurred, they would experience a strange floating sensation. Hundreds of listeners telephoned the BBC claiming to have felt just that.

Richard Branson flew a hot air balloon designed to look like a flying saucer over London in 1989, while in 1950 Germany saw a Roswell-like announcement of a crashed saucer near Wiesbaden, with a photo of a small, one-legged extraterrestrial supposedly found near the wreckage by American soldiers.

In 1967, Swiss Radio announced that US astronauts had just landed on the Moon – two years before they actually did – with an hour of elaborately staged updates, correspondent reports and expert interviews. Belief was near total – as advised, masses of people left Zurich to watch the "Moonship" take off from the Moon at 7pm, from high vantage points away from city lights.

KEYSTONE / HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: In 1976, Patrick Moore convinced people that a rare planetary alignment had lessened Earth's gravity.

TOP APRIL FOOL HOAXES WITH FORTEAN THEMES

(Showing overall rank in Top 100 and year)

CRYPTOZOOLOGY (9)

#13: The Body of Nessie Found (1972)
#19: Hotheaded Naked Ice Borers (1995)
#25: Flying Penguins (2008)
#40: The Frankfurt Zoo's White Elephant (1949)
#51: Retro-breeding the Woolly Mammoth (1984)
#53: Canned Unicorn Meat (2010)
#71: Qualcomm's Wolf Pigeon (2009)
#82: How To Cook A Unicorn (2012)
#93: The Tasmanian Mock Walrus (1984)

SCIENCE (13)

#2: Instant Colour TV (1962)
#12: Man Flies By Own Lung Power (1934)
#30: Boimate (1983)
#31: Thomas Edison Invents Food Machine (1878)
#34: The Interfering Brassieres (1982)
#36: Whistling Carrots (2002)
#43: Diseases of *Brunus edwardii* (1972)
#45: Smellovision (1965)
#49: Rain-Deflecting Open Top Car (1983)
#54: Lard From Live Pigs (1921)
#61: Contra-Polar Energy (1995)
#70: Atmospheric Energy Harnessed (1923)
#92: The British Weather Machine (1981)

UFOS/SPACE (4)

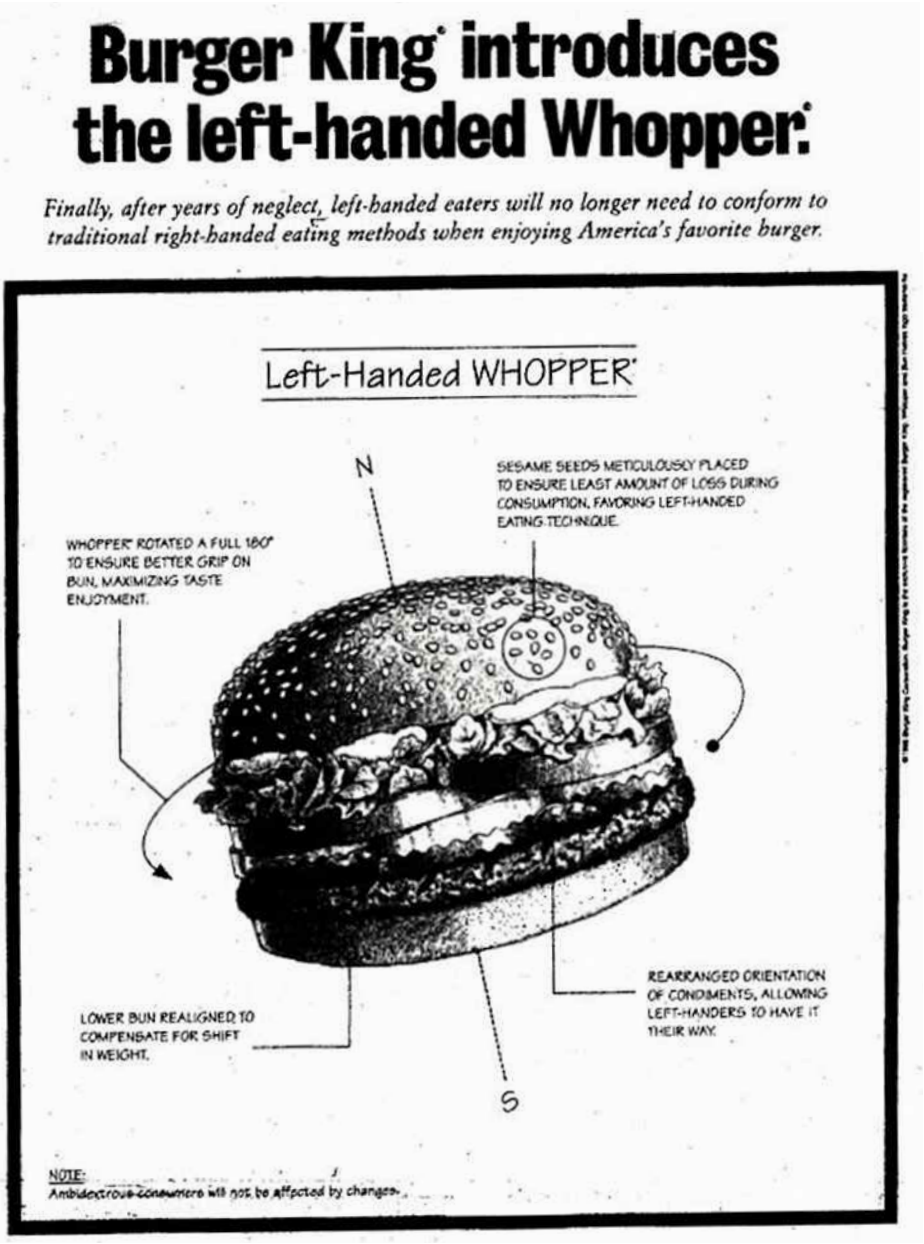
#6: Planetary Alignment Decreases Gravity (1976)
#8: UFO Lands in London (1989)
#28: The Swiss Moon Landing Hoax (1967)
#52: The Wiesbaden Martian (1950)

PSYCHOLOGY (5)

#37: Gmail Motion (2011)
#20: The Left-Handed Whopper (1998)
#42: Viewers Take Offense (1960)
#66: Nat Tate (1998)
#83: Why Doesn't America Read Anymore? (2014)

MISCELLANEOUS (7)

#3: The Eruption of Mount Edgecumbe (1974)
#16: Easter Island Statue Washes Ashore (1962)
#21: The Predictions of Isaac Bickerstaff (1708)
#33: Atomic Mist Invades Eindhoven (1947)
#76: The Derbyshire Mummified Fairy (2007)
#79: Frogs Meet Wave (1906)
#84: World to End Tomorrow (1940)

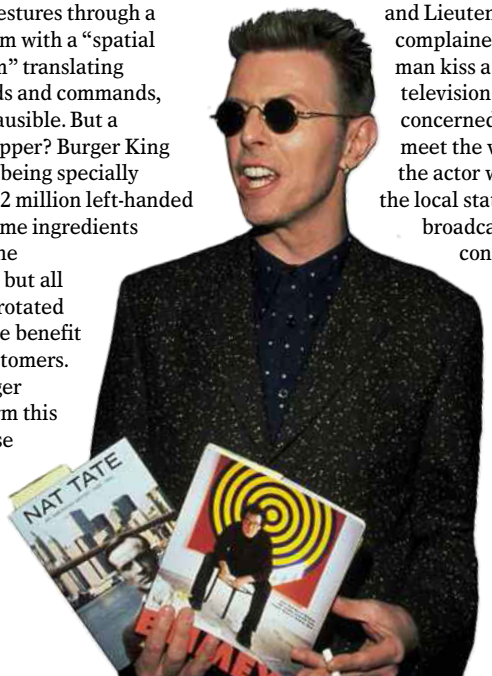

Burger King introduces the left-handed Whopper.
Finally, after years of neglect, left-handed eaters will no longer need to conform to traditional right-handed eating methods when enjoying America's favorite burger.
Left-Handed WHOPPER
N
SESAME SEEDS METICULOUSLY PLACED TO ENSURE LEAST AMOUNT OF LOSS DURING CONSUMPTION, FAVORING LEFT-HANDED EATING TECHNIQUE.
WHOPPER ROTATED A FULL 180° TO ENSURE BETTER GRIP ON BUN, MAXIMIZING TASTE ENJOYMENT.
REARRANGED ORIENTATION OF CONDIMENTS, ALLOWING LEFT-HANDERS TO HAVE IT THEIR WAY.
LOWER BUN REALIGNED TO COMPENSATE FOR SHIFT IN WEIGHT.
S
NOTE:
Ambidextrous consumers will not be affected by changes.

ABOVE: A 1998 poster for Burger King's left-handed Whopper (the condiments were rotated 180 degrees).
ABOVE: In the same year, David Bowie helped launch William Boyd's biography of fictional artist Nat Tate.

PSYCHOLOGY HOAXES

Google's announcement introducing *Gmail Motion*, a technology enabling email writing using only hand gestures through a computer's webcam with a "spatial tracking algorithm" translating gestures into words and commands, is very vaguely plausible. But a Left-Handed Whopper? Burger King advertised this as being specially designed for the 32 million left-handed Americans: the same ingredients were used as for the original Whopper, but all condiments were rotated 180 degrees for the benefit of left-handed customers. The next day Burger King had to confirm this was a hoax because thousands of customers had requested the new sandwich in restaurants, and "many others requested their own 'right handed' version."

In early 1960 – pre-Captain Kirk and Lieutenant Uhura – a viewer complained about seeing a black man kiss a white woman on a television show. The network concerned flew an executive to meet the viewer to explain that the actor was actually white, but the local station had accidentally broadcast the show at a high contrast ratio, making him look dark-skinned. Paul Krassner (editor of the satirical underground magazine *The Realist*) was outraged that a TV network was so afraid of offending a racist, and asked his readers to write to the network after the 1 April



STEVE AZZARA / CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

airing of the panel show *Masquerade Party* to complain about being offended by something on it, without specifying what had offended them. Hundreds obliged, causing panic at the network. Apparently the TV executives watched recordings of the show repeatedly, desperate to work out what had caused so much offence.

William Boyd's biography of the late American artist Nat Tate — a troubled abstract expressionist who leapt to his death from the Staten Island ferry – was launched at a star-studded party in New York, with David Bowie reading selections aloud, and art critics making appreciative remarks about Tate's work. A week later it was revealed that Nat Tate didn't exist and was entirely Boyd's fabrication. It was noted that while no one at the party had claimed to know Tate well, no one admitted to never having heard of him — although no one had.

When *NPR News* linked its Facebook page to the article *"Why Doesn't America Read Anymore?"* it generated hundreds of comments. However, none of these posters had clicked on the link to read the article, because if they had, they would have read: *"We sometimes get the sense that some people are commenting on NPR stories that they haven't actually read. If you are reading this, please like this post and do not comment on it. Then let's see what people have to say about this 'story.'"* Clearly the posters had unwittingly demonstrated the relevance of the question.

MISCELLANEOUS HOAXES

These hoaxes demonstrate the full range of human ingenuity and gullibility at the same time. In 1962, an "authentic" Easter Island statue was washed up on the beach near Holland's Zandvoort. An "atomic mist" was to descend upon Eindhoven in 1947, but the effects could be ameliorated by "sitting on a thin pole with your arms and legs stretched out in front of you". At 10 o'clock on 1 April 1906, thousands of Kansans went to Wichita to see the predicted meeting of an 11-feet high wave moving southward down the Arkansas River with an 11-mile long mass of millions of frogs migrating northward up the river. In 2005, an eight-inch winged creature found in Derbyshire and identified as a mummified fairy, with many dismissing the subsequent confession of hoax as a a "cover-up".

ABOVE: Porky Bickar's 1974 April Fool, which involved hauling hundreds of tyres into a dormant volcano and setting fire to them – remains a classic. **BELOW:** The discovery of a mummified fairy in Derbyshire in 2007.

Then there was the press release from Philadelphia's Franklin Institute on 31 March 1940 declaring the world would end the following day.[7] More than 200 years earlier, in 1708, there was Jonathan Swift's prank aimed at the famous astrologer John Partridge. Assuming the personage of Isaac Bickerstaff, an unknown London astrologer, Swift published an almanac predicting Partridge's death by fever on 29 March, and then published a pamphlet announcing the prediction's fulfilment on 30 March. Despite his protests Partridge couldn't convince people that he wasn't dead, and eventually stopped publishing his own almanacs.

But for sheer effort, a prize must go to Alaska's Porky Bickar who flew hundreds of old tyres into the crater of the long-dormant volcano Mount Edgecumbe. He set them on fire and convinced the people of nearby Sitka that the volcano was stirring to life.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Over one-third of the best April Fools' hoaxes have a fortean theme. I find it reassuring that fortean topics appear to play such a major role in the public imagination, with so many people accepting the possibility of decidedly strange phenomena. It's worth noting that in very many cases people simply reacted to headlines rather than reading further, and the more reliable and established the source, the more willing people were to believe. What was the Number One hoax on the list? It couldn't be anything other than the superb *Swiss Spaghetti Harvest* shown on the BBC news programme *Panorama* in 1957. This reported a bumper spaghetti crop and showed Swiss peasants pulling strands of spaghetti down from trees.[7] Huge numbers of viewers were taken in. So on 1 April 2017, don't believe everything you see and hear reported in the media!

NOTES

1 www.history.com/this-day-in-history/april-fools-tradition-popularized

2 http://hoaxes.org

3 By pure coincidence John was a fellow student I knew in Goodricke College, University of York.

4 www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dfWzp7rYR4

5 *Veterinary Record*, 1 Apr 1972; 90(14):382-5.

6 Patrick Moore was an inveterate hoaxer. He was accused of being "Cedric Allingham" who wrote *Flying Saucers from Mars*, which he always denied. See **FT298:26** and https://drdavidclarke.co.uk/2012/12/09/sir-patrick-moore-1923-2012-astronomer-and-flying-saucerer/

7 www.youtube.com/watch?v=tVo_wkxH9dU

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

ROB GANDY is a visiting professor at the Liverpool Business School, John Moores University. He has written for FT on ghostlore, football curses and phantom hitchhikers.

THE CORPSE FACTORY

'Fake News' is nothing new and false stories were widely spread by soldiers, civilians and propagandists during World War I. DAVID CLARKE investigates a gruesome rumour of factories used for converting human corpses into fat and oil that has been called "the master hoax" and the "most appalling atrocity story" of the 1914-18 conflict.

That Germans boil dead soldiers down for fat;
And he was horrified. "What shameful sin!
O Sir, that Christian souls should come to that!"

Siegfried Sasson, *The Tombstone Maker* [1]

During World War I, Allied soldiers were the source of a gruesome rumour that the Germans were boiling down the bodies of their own dead – an atrocity that was used by British propagandists to blacken the name of the enemy. "Out of their own mouths, the military masters of Germany stand convicted of an act of unspeakable savagery which has shocked the whole civilised world," proclaimed a pamphlet produced by British military intelligence for worldwide distribution in 1917. "Attila's Huns were guilty of atrocious crimes, but they never desecrated the bodies of dead soldiers – their own flesh, as well as the fallen of the enemy – by improvising a factory for the conversion of human corpses into fat and oils, and fodder for pigs". [2]

The 'Corpse Conversion Factory' or *Kadaveranstalt* was just one of a series of rumours and fake news that spread through Allied countries during the war. Some originated in gossip and rumour before they appeared in print. Others were encouraged by false news reports passed by the censor. From 1914 the German Army was demonised by influential sections of the British media, which accused the Kaiser's forces of a series of atrocities. Examples include the massacre of Belgian civilians and, following the Second Battle of Ypres at Easter 1915, the crucifixion of a Canadian soldier. For the first two years of the war these stories – some true, some demonstrably false and others unresolved – encouraged new recruits to join the fight against the brutality and 'frightfulness' of the German military machine.

THE HUNS AND THEIR DEAD.

HORRIFYING REVELATIONS.

PRISONER'S STATEMENT TO A KENT SERGEANT.

There have been horrifying revelations during the past week as to the use the Germans are making of their dead, following a reference by the war correspondent of the Berlin "Lokalauzeigel" to the existence of the Corpse Utilisation Factory of a particular Army group.

Confirmation of the account which has been published of the Corpse Utilisation Company's enterprise is afforded by a statement made by a Kent sergeant who has arrived from the Front wounded. Describing the prisoners taken in the recent fighting, he said:—"One of them who spoke English told me—mind, I don't know that it's true, but he told me—that even when they're dead their work isn't done. They are wired together in batches then, and boiled down in factories as a business, to make fat for munition making and to feed pigs and poultry, and God knows what besides. Then other folk eat the pigs and poultry, so you may say it's cannibalism, isn't it? This fellow told me Fritz calls his margarine 'corpse fat,' because they suspect that's what it comes from."

"THE MILITARY MASTERS OF GERMANY STAND CONVICTED"

But the failure of the Somme campaign, launched by the Allied armies in 1916 to break the stalemate on the Western Front, meant the grinding attrition of trench warfare would continue. The British military realised that a different type of warfare was required to damage the German war effort – one that substituted shells with words. After three years of war and an Allied naval blockade, Germany was desperately short of some of the most basic materials. Meanwhile, the Allies were plotting to bring China and other neutral countries in the Far East into the war against the Central Powers.

LEFT: A report on the 'corpse factory' from an English regional newspaper. **OPPOSITE:** "Cannon Fodder – and after". In a *Punch* cartoon from April 1917. The German Emperor addresses a new recruit with the words "...and don't forget that your Kaiser will find a use for you – alive or dead".

THE RUMOUR MILL

Where did the unlikely story of the corpse factory originate? Rumours had been circulating since 1915, both in Flanders and on the Home Front, that claimed the Germans had secret installations behind their front line where the bodies of dead soldiers were rendered down into fats. Depending upon which source you believed, the *Kadaveranstalt* utilised these fats to manufacture industrial munitions, lubricants, fertiliser, candles, boot dubbing, animal feed and soap.

The rumour was so well known on the Home Front that by June 1915 Cynthia Asquith, the daughter-in-law of the British Prime Minister, referred to it glibly in her diary. One day after a "pleasant dinner", she notes how "we discussed the rumour that the Germans utilise even their corpses by converting them into glycerine with the by-product of soap". She suggested, jokingly, that Lord Haldane "should offer his vast body as raw material" to David Lloyd George, who at that time was Minister of Munitions. [3]

It is impossible to trace the story to its

KADAVERVERWERTUNGS

"CAN'T BELIEVE A WORD YOU READ, SIR, CAN YOU?"

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM © IWM (Q 9384)

ABOVE: The cook-house in the tunnel of the St Quentin Canal, hit by an Allied shell on 4 October 1918.

A gruesome incident from the final stages of WWI serves to illustrate how deeply 'trench myths' such as the Corpse Factory legend had become embedded in the psyches of war-weary soldiers. In the autumn of 1918 a carefully planned counter-attack by the Allies, reinforced by thousands of fresh American troops, broke through the German defences along the Hindenburg Line. In October, a team of Royal Engineers arrived at Bellicourt, where the St Quentin Canal runs underground for 6km (3.7 miles). The 'booby-trappers' were given the task of exploring every nook and cranny for landmines left behind by the retreating German army.

"It was at the Bellicourt end of the tunnel that we made the discovery," said Corporal Arthur Beresford, a miner from County Durham. "About four yards inside the entrance of the tunnel there was an underground chamber… an officer went in, and in a few seconds came out spitting. We went in and saw a number of bodies of German soldiers, fully clothed, and tied up in bundles of about six each. We had found bodies tied up like that on the battlefield before and we took it that it was done for them to be carried away easily… The walls of the room were blackened with smoke and inside there was a big wooden block, scored on the top with the blows of an axe or cleaver. There was a set-pot, like a big round boiler… with the remains of a fire in a grate underneath. Parts of human bodies were in this boiler, and arms and legs were sticking out. About a dozen wooden buckets, like those used for lard, were full of yellow fat."

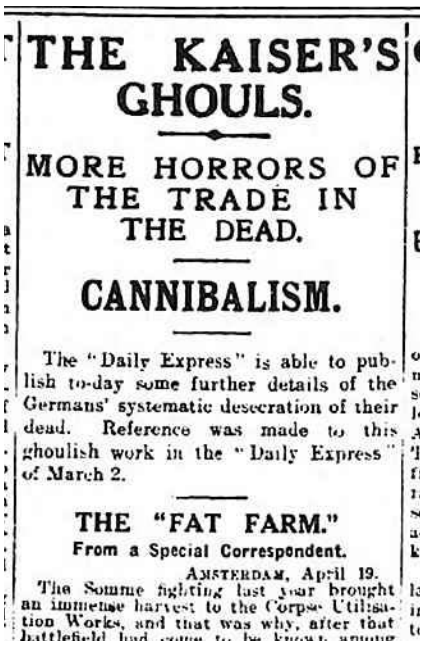
Cpl Beresford came forward to tell his story in October 1925 after the press broke the story of General Charteris's reported confession. [1] The soldier said he and Lance Cpl J Ibbitson had no doubt' the bodies they saw "were boiled in the pot" and had been rendered down for their fat. But where Beresford and Ibbitson saw a 'corpse factory' others who visited the scene saw something else entirely. Writing to the *Hull Daily Mail*, Thomas Leggott said everything he and fellow officers examined in the chamber "was consistent with the place being a Bosch cook-house, the dead Germans evidently having been killed by a shell". The underground chamber was also visited by the journalist Charles Edward Montague, who was an intelligence officer during the war. In *Disenchantment*, published in 1922, Montague says that "shells had gone into cook-houses of ours, long before then, and had messed up the cooks with the stew. A quite simple case". He describes how an Australian sergeant surveyed the "disappointing scene" of death and destruction, "then he broke the silence in which we had made our inspections. 'Can't believe a word you read, sir, can you?' he said with some bitterness. Life had failed to yield one of its advertised marvels. The press had lied again. The propaganda myth about Germans had cracked up once more."

NOTES

1 *Leeds Mercury*, 29 Oct 1925.

source, but Adrian Gregory suggests "the disturbing disparity between visible British corpses after the first day of the Somme, and the near absence of German dead on many parts of the front" may have led some troops to resort to "a folkloric explanation" to explain what happened to them. [4] The horrible 'Corpse Factory' or 'Tallow Works' was hiding in plain sight, in a poem by Siegfried Sasson written in October 1916 that refers to the bodies of German soldiers boiled down to extract their fat. Its source, like many rumours, did not originate with one person or organisation but sprang up in many varied locations. Paul Fussell in *The Great War and Modern Memory* refers to an analogous legend of the sinister Corpse Reducer or Destructor that was located on the British side of the front, at the notorious British training camp in Etaples. One of his sources refers to this as "the largest Destructor the British Army possessed. Everything that could come under the head of refuse was brought here… to be reduced to ashes – even, according to a sinister report, the arms and legs of human beings". [5]

But the enemy were accused not just of



THE KAISER'S GHOULS.

MORE HORRORS OF THE TRADE IN THE DEAD.

CANNIBALISM.

The "Daily Express" is able to publish to-day some further details of the Germans' systematic desecration of their dead. Reference was made to this ghoulish work in the "Daily Express" of March 2.

THE "FAT FARM."

From a Special Correspondent.

AMSTERDAM, April 19.

The Somme fighting last year brought an immense harvest to the Corpse Utilisation Works, and that was why, after that battlefield had come to be known among

ABOVE: A *Daily Express* story from April 1917.

reducing their soldiers to ashes. The Germans drew upon the most advanced science and technology to help dispose of human remains with Teutonic efficiency. As one soldier interviewed by the *Daily Express* put it, when the corpses are recycled into animal feed "other folk eat the pigs and poultry, so you may say it's *cannibalism*. Fritz calls his margarine 'corpse fat' because they suspect that's what it comes from."

READ ALL ABOUT IT

Until 1917 these stories had never received official confirmation from any official source. That was until two newspapers owned by one of the most powerful Press barons, Lord Northcliffe, published the story as a proven fact. Alfred Harmsworth, first Viscount Northcliffe, had launched the million-selling *Daily Mail* in 1896. His political influence and pre-war anti-German vitriol had proved so effective that he was offered the post of director of propaganda by David Lloyd George, who succeeded Herbert Asquith as Prime Minister in 1916. The newspaper baron was hated so much by the enemy that at one point the German navy sent a cruiser to shell

ATION.—THE HUNS' "KADAVER" SERVICE.

THE "KADAVER" HORROR.—HOW THE HUNS CART AWAY THEIR BATTLEFIELD DEAD.—In view of the ghastly revelations, lately made by the Germans themselves, of the utilisation of their dead, this photograph, found by a British cavalry officer on the body of a German near Delville Wood, is a sufficient indication of the Huns' treatment of those who have died that "Kultur" may live.

THE HUNS' CORPSE FACTORY.

FACSIMILE OF GERMAN REPORT.

UNIVERSAL HORROR.

Universal horror has been aroused by the revelations in *The Daily Mail* of Monday and yesterday of the German admission that factories are run for extracting oils, fats, and pig-food from the bodies of the German private soldiers killed in battle.

Such a callous admission in a German newspaper is so opposed to humane instincts that people here who do not yet know the Hun can scarcely credit it. We reproduce below the passage from the Berlin *Local-Advertiser* (*Anzeiger*) of April 10. It occurs in an article headed as follows:

Der Kampf nördlich von Reims.

Von uns. nach dem westlichen Kriegsschauplatz entsandten Kriegsberichterstatter Karl Rosner.

An der Westfront, 5. April.

The above means:

THE BATTLE NORTH OF RHEIMS.

By our War Correspondent despatched to the Western Theatre of War, Karl Rosner.

On the West Front, April 5.

The article describes the correspondent's journey. The passage about the corpse factory is as follows:

ABOVE LEFT: A British newspaper uses an image of German battlefield dead to suggest that a macabre fate lies in store for these fallen soldiers.
ABOVE RIGHT: A 17 April report in the *Daily Mail* offers what purports to be a first-hand account of a visit to a 'corpse factory' from a German newspaper.

his home in Kent.

On the same day, 17 April 1917, his papers the *Times* and the *Daily Mail* published what they claimed was conclusive evidence the 'corpse factory' did exist. The *Times* ran the story under the headline 'Germans and their Dead', attributing the claim to two separate sources, a Belgian newspaper published in England and a story that originally appeared in a German newspaper, *Berliner Lokalanzeiger*. The latter was a short account by reporter Karl Rosner who described an unpleasant smell "as if lime was being burnt" as he passed a factory behind the German lines. He said the fats that were rendered there were turned into lubricating oils and manure, adding that "nothing can be permitted to go to waste". Rosner used the word *Kadaver*, which referred to the bodies of animals – mainly horses – *not* human bodies.

But the *Daily Mail* described this as a "callous admission" by the Germans that the factory was used for "extracting oils, fats and pig-food from the bodies of German private soldiers killed in battle". The *Times* said Rosner's story was corroborated by what it called "a striking account of this horrible German industry" that appeared in the *Independence Belge*, published in Holland, on 10 April. "Omitting some of the most repulsive details," the account quotes an anonymous source who says "the factory is invisible from the railway… it is placed deep in forest country, with a specially thick growth of trees around it." Bodies arrived on trains where they were unloaded by staff who "wear oilskin overalls and masks with mica eyepieces".

THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT PROTESTED AT THESE CLAIMS

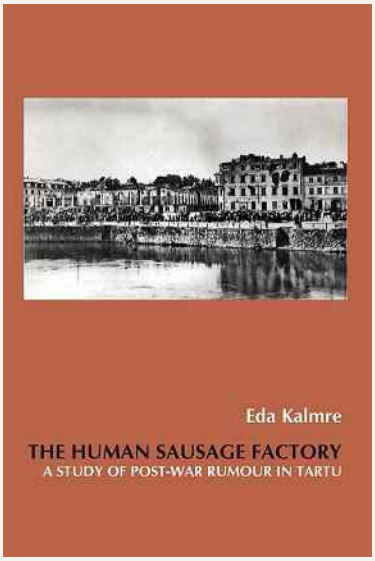
James Hayward in *Myths and Legends of the First World War* says the account that follows "reads like a nightmarish parody of Jules Verne or HG Wells". The workers were "… equipped with long hooked poles used to push the bundles of bodies to an endless chain, which picks them up with big hooks… The bodies are transported on this endless chain into a long, narrow compartment, where they pass through a bath which disinfects them. They then go through a drying chamber, and finally are carried into a digester or great cauldron, in which they are dropped by an apparatus …In the digester they remain for six to eight hours, and are treated by steam, which breaks them up while they are slowly stirred by machinery". [6]

Soon afterwards the *Daily Express* published a story that directly accused the Germans of cannibalism. The paper claimed the "fat farm", as it was known by German soldiers, was established soon after the slaughter on the Somme in 1916. "Some people believe that there is only one German factory for this damnable work out of which Germans are making handsome dividends," it claimed. "This is not so. The factories are established in each army area, including Rumania. This the Germans have admitted". [7] A cartoon published by *Punch* soon afterwards imagined the horrific scene under the caption "CANNON FODDER – AND AFTER". It shows the German Emperor addressing a new recruit, a young private: "*…and don't forget that your Kaiser will find a use for you – alive or dead*". [8]

The German government protested against what they called "these loathsome and ridiculous claims", which were the result of a deliberate mistranslation of the German word *Kadaver*. On 11 May, the German Foreign Secretary threatened newspapers in neutral countries with libel proceedings if they re-published the lie. But their protests fell on deaf ears as both the Chinese Ambassador and the Maharajah of Biikanir issued public expressions of horror at German treatment of their dead, the latter warning if the bodies of Indian soldiers were treated in this way it "would be regarded as an atrocity that would never be forgotten or forgiven".

In the House of Commons, in response to questions from MPs, Lord Robert Cecil, the Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, refused to deny the story, saying: "In view of other actions by the German military authorities there is nothing incredible in the present charge against them". Officially, the Department of Information at Wellington House – the HQ of the British government's propaganda bureau – refused to circulate

THE HUMAN SAUSAGE FACTORY



Rumours about cannibalism on the battlefield are not confined to the horrors of the Western Front during World War I. In 2013 the Estonian folklorist Eda Kalmre published a study of rumours about a 'human sausage factory' that operated in the ruins of the Baltic country's second largest city, Tartu, after World War II.[1] The persistence of this story was demonstrated 70 years later in testimony provided by Tartu residents that Kalmre interviewed during her research.

During WWII Estonia's population suffered occupation first by the Soviet Union (1939-41) then by the Nazis (1941-44) until the devastated country was absorbed back into the Soviet Union, where it remained until 1991. Kalmre argues the censorship imposed during the Soviet occupation and the lack of reliable journalism encouraged false rumours to spread. She found references to the factory whilst working in the Estonia Folklore Archive and referred to them, in a newspaper interview, not as historical fact but as "clear horror stories". This prompted some readers to protest. They insisted the story was "not folklore" because they, or their parents and friends, had personally visited the ruins of the factory and wanted to set the record straight. One Tartu resident, born in 1941, phoned the archive to "tell [Eda] the story… is, unfortunately, true, just like the human hair hanging from hooks and the brown stains on the walls, which I saw with my own eyes" as a child. Kalmre located a KGB memorandum from February 1947 that refers to rumours spread by ethnic Estonians of "persons unknown [who] were engaged in killing people" among the ruins of a building on the corner of Soola and Turu streets. It says the story emerged after one woman managed to escape and raise the alarm.

Rumours spread that the flesh of the factory's victims had been made into sausages and soap that had been sold in the market. Militias had arrested three people: a Jew, a gypsy and an Estonian. The KGB document reveals the three persons arrested were all local Estonian women. Under interrogation they claimed to have seen human skulls and other bones among the ruins of a building, but the KGB gave no credence to their stories. As a counter-measure, the head of Tartu's State Security Council threatened to prosecute anyone engaged in spreading what they called "provocative rumours".

Kalmre says that what transformed a "horror story" into plausible reality for some Estonians is implicit in their stories, in that after the ruinous war "times were so bad that anything was possible, even selling sausages made from human meat".

NOTES

1 Eda Kalmre, *The Human Sausage Factory: A Study of Post-War Rumour in Tartu* (2013).

the story. But files show that a number of officials at the Foreign Office believed the corpse factory was a fact. At a meeting of the British War Cabinet on 2 May, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General (later Field Marshal) Sir William Robertson told the Prime Minister that he had obtained a copy of the German Order for the 6th Army, "giving details relative to the despatch of corpses, which indicated clearly that the corpses in question referred to human beings". [9]

BLACK PROPAGANDA

But despite the certainty of such highly-placed believers, the German Corpse Factory did not exist. It began as a rumour with no single source, but by 1917 it had been repackaged as a piece of black propaganda designed to demonise the Germans and entice the Chinese and others to join the Allied forces. Sociologist Randal Marlin believes the story was so successful because "it had a powerfully persuasive effect on many people around the world [and] it was cleverly presented to maximise credibility". [10]

THE REPORT WAS USED FOR PROPAGANDA PURPOSES

Some historians entirely blamed the Northcliffe press for giving official credence to this most false of all WWI fake news stories. Newspapers with massive circulations took an idea that had, until 1917, lacked credibility and made the 'evidence' for it appear convincing by the use of eyewitness testimony. But who provided the ammunition and encouraged them to fire it? In 1928 the Labour MP Arthur Ponsonby, in his book *Falsehood in Wartime,* pointed the finger of blame at the British government, which he claimed had both "encouraged and connived" with its friends in the Press to set this hare running.

For its part, the government failed to issue a complete denial until 1925 when Sir Austen Chamberlain admitted, in a House of Commons statement, there was "never any foundation" for what he called "this false report". But in the same year the Conservative MP John Charteris, who as a Brigadier General had served as Chief of Army Intelligence under Douglas Haig during the Great War, caused political embarrassment after he said it had indeed been used for propaganda purposes [11].

Whilst on a lecture tour of the USA in 1925, Charteris reportedly admitted his intelligence branch at GHQ France had played a role in spreading the story. The *New York Times* revealed how, at a dinner meeting of the National Arts Club, he confessed to having transposed captions from one of two photographs found on captured German soldiers. One showed a train taking dead horses to be rendered. The other showed a train taking dead soldiers for burial. The photo of the horses had the word 'cadaver' written upon it and Charteris "had the caption transposed to the picture showing the German dead, and had the photograph sent to a Chinese newspaper in Shanghai". According to the *Times* report, the story was planted in the full knowledge that it would be followed up by European newspapers and generate horror and anti-German feelings. [12]

On his return to Britain, Charteris denied making the remarks, and since that time no one has been able to discover any clear evidence that might link military intelligence with the press campaign of 1917. But I found what I believe could be one of the photographs referred to by Charteris in Foreign Office files at The National Archives in Kew. The black and white image, dated 17 September 1917, clearly shows bodies of German soldiers, tied in bundles, resting on a train as Charteris had described in 1925. The covering letter, from an MI7 officer at Whitehall, is addressed to the Director of Information, Lt Col John Buchan, author of the espionage novel *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915). It offers Buchan "a photograph of Kadavers, forwarded by General Charteris for propaganda purposes". A handwritten note urges caution but says the photograph should be placed in "the Kadaver file". [13]

CROWN COPYRIGHT / THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

ABOVE LEFT: Could one of these photographs – showing a train taking dead German soldiers for burial – be the one recaptioned and planted in the foreign press by Brigadier General John Charteris as a piece of 'black' propaganda? **ABOVE RIGHT:** "Alas! My poor brother!". A particularly sinister cartoon by Bruce Bairnsfather, creator of 'Old Bill'.

There is no evidence that any newspaper in China printed this or any other photograph showing 'Kadavers', but early in May the *Daily Mail* published a similar image under the headline 'The Kadaver Horror', captioned: "In view of the ghastly revelations of the utilisation of their dead, this photograph, found by a British cavalry officer on the body of a German near Delville Wood, is sufficient indication of the Huns' treatment of those who have died that "Kultur" may live".[14] MI7 were a military intelligence branch that specialised in anti-German propaganda in neutral countries. One of its tasks was to censor captions from captured photographs. In 1917, its writers produced a four-page pamphlet called *A Corpse-Conversion Factory: A Peep Behind Enemy Lines* that was published by Wellington House. The Foreign Office files show that officials authorised its translation into a number of foreign languages and for distribution in Europe and the Far East. MI7 was disbanded in 1918 because its work had been accomplished and its records were destroyed on the grounds they could be incriminating.

Surviving histories show that in 1917 MI7 employed 13 officers and 25 paid writers, some of whom also worked as 'special correspondents' for national newspapers.[15] One of the most talented was Major Hugh Pollard, whose WWII SOE file reveals he combined his secret work as a propagandist with a reporting role on the staff of the *Daily Express*. The paper's proprietor, Lord Beaverbrook, became Minister of Information in the War Cabinet during 1918.

After the war, Pollard boasted of his role in the corpse factory saga to his cousin Ivor Montagu, who writing in 1970, recalled "… how we laughed at his cleverness when he told us how his department [MI7] had launched the account of the German corpse factories and of how the Hun was using the myriads of trench-war casualties for making soap and margarine". According to Montague, Pollard claimed full credit for the original invention of the story, intended "to discredit the enemy among the populations of Oriental countries, hoping to play upon the respect for the dead that goes with ancestor-worship. To the surprise of the authorities it had caught on, and they were now making propaganda out of it everywhere".[16]

Pollard's claim to be the sole author of the legend must be questioned,[17] but philosopher Bertrand Russell, in his account of wartime propaganda, attributes the corpse factory to "one of the employees in the British propaganda department, a man with a good knowledge of German, perfectly aware that 'Kadaver' means 'carcase' not 'corpse' but aware also that, with the Allied command of the means of publicity, the misrepresentation could be made to 'go down'".[18] For those who spread fake news in World War I, the Germans were so evil that anything could be used as a propaganda weapon against them – and that included rumours, lies and what we would today call fake news.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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NOTES

1 Siegfried Sassoon, *The War Poems* (1983), p54.

2 *A "Corpse Conversion" Factory*, Darling & Son, London, 1917 (copy in Masterman Papers, University of Birmingham special collections).

3 Cynthia Asquith, *Diaries 1915-18* (1968), p44.

4 Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War* (2008), p306.

5 Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), pp116-17.

6 *Times*, 17 April 1917.

7 *Daily Express*, 21 April 1917.

8 *Punch*, 25 April 1917. AA. Milne, the assistant editor of *Punch*, was attached to the General Press Propaganda section of MI7's offices in Adelphi Court, Strand.

9 TNA CAB 23/2/48.

10 Randall Marlin, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion* (1999), p72.

11 Charteris collected many rumours during his intelligence work including those about the Russians 'with snow on their boots', the Angels of Mons and the Crucified Canadian. He refers to all of these in his memoirs *At GHQ* (1931) but curiously his book omits any reference to the strangest rumour of all, the corpse factory.

12 The *Times* (London), 4 Nov 1925.

13 TNA FO 395/148.

14 *Daily Mail*, 3 May 1917.

15 TNA *History of MI7* (1916-18), INF 4/1B.

16 Ivor Montagu, *The Youngest Son* (1970), p31.

17 Pollard's role in the creation of other WWI rumours will be discussed in a future article for *FT*. His SOE file at The National Archives reveals he was fluent in French, German and Spanish. It describes him "an ardent fascist" who helped to fly General Franco from the Canaries at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. The file reveals he was recruited to work as a spy for MI6 at the outbreak of WWII but he was dismissed in 1940 for reasons that were redacted from the file. In another note a MI6 officer describes him as "definitely unreliable where money and drink was concerned".

18 Bertrand Russell, 'Government by Propaganda', in *These Eventful Years* (1924), p380.

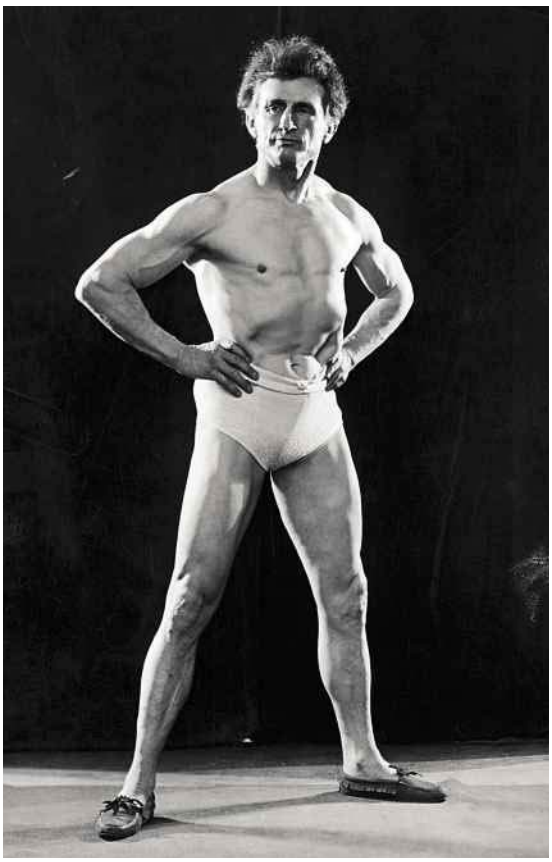
FAKING FORTEANA

Manufactured and misleading news is not an invention of the Internet age. Its roots go back much further – in part to the 1920s, and a forgotten journalistic revolution improbably conceived by 'the father of modern bodybuilding' and a socialist muckraker. **MIKE DASH** dons his fedora to report.

He stood no more than 5ft 6in tall, and yet he was a giant of a man. Bernarr Macfadden may be barely remembered now, but he was among the most famous public figures of his day. He was a master of reinvention: born plain Bernard McFadden in 1868, he crafted what he decided was a more distinguished version of his name, the rolling "r"s intended to evoke a lion's roar. He was an entirely self-made man: an orphaned Mid-West farm-boy at 11, he turned himself by force of will into a multi-millionaire publisher who influenced thousands of lives. He championed self-improvement, popularised bodybuilding, and, well into his 70s, continued to pose practically nude to show off his physique.

Macfadden matters for many reasons. He inspired and promoted others who became influential themselves; Charles Atlas, the star of a thousand comic book adverts, first found fame as the winner of a 'World's most perfectly developed man' contest promoted by Macfadden. He was a bizarre amalgam of prescience and quackery; a lifelong promoter of the virtues of whole foods, eating fresh vegetables, shedding corsets and being honest about sex (all ideas he championed well before they were remotely commonplace), he also implacably opposed vaccination, and believed that encroaching baldness was best treated by attacking the scalp. The remarkable pompadour that Macfadden sported throughout his adult life was the product of decades spent violently yanking his own hair by the roots.

For a fortean, however, Macfadden matters for quite another reason. He was the inventor and populariser of confessional journalism, the prurient, semi-fictionalised tell-all form that went on to underpin *Confidential* in the 1950s, Oprah and Jerry Springer in the 1990s, and the apparently bottomless well of 'reality' TV we're so familiar with today. In consequence, he was also responsible – inadvertently – for polluting our field with a myriad of the inventions and 'improvements' that bedevil it today. For much of the 1920s, indeed, magazines that Macfadden launched behaved much like the fake news mills that became infamous in the aftermath of the recent US presidential election. They took tales that might possess a kernel of truth, and elaborated them until they turned into something more incredible, more memorable – and much less 'true.'



BETTMANN / GETTY IMAGES

LEFT: The 55-year-old Bernarr Macfadden – bodybuilder, publisher and implacable foe of baldness – poses for the camera in 1923.

MACFADDEN WAS AN AMALGAM OF PRESCIENCE AND QUACKERY

VANISHING LIGHTHOUSEMEN

So let me tell you *my* confession. I first encountered Macfadden quite unexpectedly, some time ago, while chasing down a reference that had eluded me for years. The trouble dated back, in fact, to 1998, when I wrote a paper for *Fortean Studies* on the mystery of the vanishing lighthousemen of Eilean Mor. Three men had disappeared, around Christmas 1900, from a lonely lighthouse in the uninhabited Flannan Isles – the 'Seven Hunters,' they were called, 20 miles (32km) west of the Hebrides, out in the Atlantic. The men – who comprised the entire lighthouse crew – vanished without trace, leaving behind a puzzle that was considerably deepened by the strange, quasi-mystical entries that they were understood to have left in their logbook.

IAN COWE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

ABOVE: The Flannan Isles lighthouse, from which three men vanished in 1900. **BELOW:** The story was retold and embellished in the August 1929 issue of *True Strange Stories*.

Without the details of the log, indeed, the mystery was less compelling. Lighthouse keeping can be dangerous work, and Eilean Mor (the rock on which the lamp was perched) had been hit by an enormous storm shortly before Christmas. It would have been easy to suppose that the men were all out working in the storm, and were swept into the sea by a freak wave, had the entries not made it clear that their disappearance took place after the storm had passed.

It seems to have been Vincent Gaddis, a well-known writer of the 1960s, who first mentioned the existence of this logbook in a fortean work. Written in the scrawled hand of the Third Officer, Thomas Marshall (Gaddis noted in *Mysterious Fires and Lights*), the Flannan log charted a steadily-intensifying atmosphere of unspoken dread – one familiar to any horror movie fan – that seemingly overcame the First Officer, Thomas Ducat, and his assistant, Donald McArthur:

Dec. 12: Gale, north by north-west. Sea lashed to fury.

Stormbound 9pm. Never seen such a storm. Everything shipshape. Ducat irritable.

12pm. Storm still raging. Wind steady. Stormbound. Cannot go out. Ship passed sounding foghorn. Could see lights of cabins. Ducat quiet. McArthur crying.

Dec. 13: Storm continued through night. Wind shifted west by north. Ducat quiet. McArthur praying.

12 noon. Grey daylight. Me, Ducat, and McArthur prayed.

Dec. 15: 1pm. Storm ended. Sea calm. God is over all.

The Hoodoo Car That Started a World War
August
TRUE STRANGE STORIES
25¢
HE THOUGHT HE KILLED LINCOLN
The Strange Romance of Eleonora Duse and D'Annunzio

"Ducat," Gaddis observed of this odd evidence, "usually very good-natured, had just returned from his leave on shore. Why should he be irritable?... McArthur, a hardened, veteran seaman… well known as a lusty, fearless brawler on land, crying! What could have been the mysterious, extraordinary situation that would make strong McArthur weep? And Michael Harrison – a writer who never encountered a mysterious detail he was not happy to endorse – went further in his own version of the tale. "With that last mysterious entry," he wrote, "the log closed, and the three terrified, praying men vanished for ever from this world."

When I first wrote about all this in 1998, I gave several reasons for suspecting that these entries were fakes. Nautical logs are not impressionistic diaries, kept by just one person, but precise records of events, written up by a changing rotation of officers of the watch. It was unlikely that Marshall – the most junior of the lighthousemen – would have made insubordinate notes in a log that his superiors would read. And, read carefully, it seemed likely that the entries were written after the event:

It would hardly be peculiar, during a routine and tedious turn of duty, for a lighthouseman to be 'quiet', so why would Marshall think to note the fact? Sensationalist writers have hinted that the notes were made because the men were increasingly aware of looming, supernatural disaster. I believe they point, rather, to the entries being a fabrication. Ducat's and Macarthur's moods of 12 and 13 December are significant only because of what happened to them on the 15th.

Further than that I could not go at the time. Gaddis had recorded where he had found his information: it had been published in an American magazine called *True Strange Stories* in August 1929. But it was not easy then to consult *TSS*, and I let the matter rest for more than a decade until, in 2008, the science writer Giles Sparrow found me at the *FT* Unconvention and handed me a copy of the article itself.

It was immediately obvious that *True Strange Stories* was indeed the source of the mysterious entries. The author of the piece, one Ernest Fallon, insisted that the details of the log were drawn "from English sources", but gave no further details – and large chunks of the remainder of his story were either heavily fictionalised or altogether wrong. One mystery had replaced another. Who was Fallon? What sort of things did *True Strange Stories* publish? And was it possible that these "English sources" existed?

Details from the archives of the Northern Lighthouse Board and contemporary

KEYSTONE-FRANCE / GAMMA-KEYSTONE VIA GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE LEFT: In 1919, Bernarr Macfadden launched *True Story* magazine; its sensational confessional content set the template for decades of successful publishing.
ABOVE RIGHT: A serious-looking Macfadden oversees his ever-expanding publishing empire from his office, in a photograph from around 1930.

newspapers suggested that the answer to the last of these questions was "No". Both made it clear that the log was kept only up to 13 December, with subsequent entries being noted, in chalk, on a slate for later transfer to the book; the whole notion of a log extending as late as 15 December is a fallacy. Even if we are charitable, and count the entries on the slate as part of the log, it is explicitly stated that the last notes (a record of the weather) were written at 9 on the morning of 15 December. The contemporary record is clear that no entry was made as late as 1pm. This must imply the records quoted by Harrison and Gaddis are a hoax.

As for Fallon, it seemed impossible to prove he even existed. A superb Internet resource, 'The Science Fiction, Fantasy and Weird Magazine Index' compiled by Phil Stephenson-Payne, notes the existence of this article, but it was apparently the only one that Fallon ever wrote. His name appears absolutely nowhere else in the literature of pulp magazines or fortean phenomena. Intriguingly enough, the same unusual claim to fame was shared by at least six other named contributors to *True Strange Stories*.

I was driven back to look at *TSS* – and, with the realisation that the magazine had been part of Macfadden's stable, the story came suddenly into focus.

MUSCLES AND MUCKRAKING

Macfadden was such a remarkable character that his life has been well studied, as has his considerable impact on publishing and journalism. Beginning with a single title, *Physical Culture* – at first little more than an advertising sheet promoting the sale of fitness gear – he slowly built a publishing empire. The real breakthrough came in 1919 when, noting the popularity of the first-person stories of triumph over adversity sent in by readers of his fitness title, he launched *True Story*, a magazine made up entirely of such features, which became the publishing sensation of the next two decades. A compelling mix of sex and sin, covering hitherto barely mentionable topics

IF A STORY SOUNDED TRUE, IT WAS TRUE ENOUGH FOR HIM

such as illegitimacy, adultery, unemployment and crime (a mix readily satirised by critics as "I'm ruined!" journalism), the magazine peaked with sales in excess of two million copies a month, made Macfadden's fortune, and received, its proud proprietor claimed, in excess of 70,000 readers' submissions every year.

Macfadden was quick to see potential in *True Story*, and numerous spin-off titles were launched – *True Romances, True Confession, True Detective* and, eventually, both *Ghost Stories* and the short-lived *True Strange Stories,* which was born and died in the year of the Wall Street Crash, 1929. All shared the formula honed by *True Story* – a mix Macfadden himself liked to call "the folk literature of the common people of America" but that his critics denounced as trash that followed a simple formula: its subjects sinned, suffered and repented, eventually finding redemption (except in *Ghost Stories*, where, as Will Murray sagely notes, they died, dematerialised and repented). For Jacqueline Hatton, though – a scholar who wrote a PhD thesis on Macfadden's publishing empire – something much stranger and more remarkable was going on:

> *The relationship between truth and reality in* True Story *is too complex to be reduced to a yes/no question… The true/false conundrum is unresolvable, and indeed pretty much irrelevant, because the concept of truth itself was highly ambiguous in* True Story. *[It] inscribed truisms rather than truths, beliefs rather than realities.*

Or, as Macfadden himself was said to have observed – in terms that have a very current resonance – if a story merely *sounded* true, it was true enough for him.

True Strange Stories, then, published articles that were "true" in Macfadden's meaning of the word. And it looked very much as though the spooky details that appeared in Fallon's article 'The Strange Log of the Seven Hunters' were exactly the sort of elaborations that a Macfadden title would happily condone. So everything pointed to the piece in *TSS* being a very 1920s version of fake news. But could I prove it?

FINDING FALLON

The answer, it seemed, had to come from finding out who Ernest Fallon was. And the solution to that mystery turned out to lurk in the memoirs of the editor of *True Strange Stories* – another forgotten man who was famous in his time. His name was John L Spivak, and in 1929 he was only just getting his start as a writer, which explained why he was willing to work for a notorious cheapskate like Bernarr Macfadden. In the 1930s, though, Spivak went on to better things. His socialist convictions led him to turn out a series of muckraking exposés of American anti-Semitism, the conditions of black prisoners on Georgia chain gangs, and the infamous 'business plot', an apparent planned coup involving George W Bush's grandfather, which sought the overthrow of democratic government and the installation of a fascist dictatorship in the United States of the Depression era. It's thanks in large part to Spivak's work that we know as much about these things as we do.

Spivak's memoirs make three key points about his tenure as the editor of *TSS*, "a magazine they were launching to see if there was a market for something besides rape, adultery and muscles". One was that the budget was tight. The second was that the magazine required huge quantities of copy – 16 to 18 features each month, each of at least 5,000 words. And the third was that a kernel of

truth was plenty for a true strange story:

> *In desperation, I decided to write them myself. One Saturday morning I went down to the [New York Public Library]. All I needed for a Macfadden "true" story were a few unusual facts, a name or two, a place or two, and, if possible, a picture to give a semblance of believability. In two or three hours of research I took enough notes for half a dozen such stories.*
>
> *By nightfall I had done a once-over-lightly draft for the first story; Sunday morning I did another. Each... meant from $100 to $120. By then I was married and had a daughter, Jacqueline, who used to watch me, fascinated, as I pounded the typewriter keys. I explained that she should not distract me; every keystroke was worth two cents. That, considering how much she could purchase with two cents, impressed her… She would clap her hands in time with the clacking of the keys and cry delightedly, "Two cents, two cents, two cents!"*

It is not exactly a confession, but it is near enough. 'Ernest Fallon' was John L Spivak. The mystical logbook entries were examples of the elaborations that he added to make mundane mysteries exciting. The crying, praying lighthousemen never existed.

And Macfadden's 1920s fake news mill had added another – especially memorable – true story that would pollute fortean potboilers for several lifetimes.

THE HOODOO CAR

True Strange Stories was not a proper precursor to *Fortean Times*. Each issue ran to 100 pages and contained an eclectic mix of true confession pieces, crime, offbeat celebrity features and fiction serials. All this meant that no more than two or three of the articles that appeared in any given issue focused on strange phenomena. But, in the course of its short life, *TSS* nonetheless managed to cover a number of cases that are still familiar to us today. Among the content that Spivak churned out were features on Phineas Gage, the railway worker who lost a large part of his brain to a tamping iron in an 1848 blasting accident; the curse supposedly attached to the Koh-i-noor diamond; and stories of children raised by wolves. (For Gage, see **FT38:30**, **258:18-19;** for the Koh-i-noor curse, see **FT161:6**; and for children raised by wolves, see Paul Sieveking 'Wild Things', **FT161:34-41**.)

It's worth taking a closer look at a second example from *TSS*'s files, if only to establish that the sort of techniques that Spivak deployed to tell the story of the vanishing lighthousemen were typical of his magazine's approach to other features. Its treatment of another fortean classic in its August 1929 issue shows this was the case.

"The Hoodoo Car That Started a World War" is a feature attributed to 'Arthur Willstach'. But it is another example of Spivak's work. We can be certain this was the case not only by referring once again to 'The Science Fiction Index' (which confirms this article was the only one that 'Willstach' ever apparently produced, and hence that this was likely one of Spivak's many pseudonyms), but also by working through the contents of the private papers that the writer willed to Syracuse University Library. Box 32 of these papers turns out to contain a typescript of what is substantially the same article, revised for resubmission to another magazine during the 1950s. It is attributed to 'Monroe Fry' – the name under which the blacklisted radical Spivak was forced to live for around a decade during the McCarthy years.

The "Hoodoo Car" story is a cursed car legend. It looks at the numerous deaths supposedly associated with the Gräf & Stift touring car in which the Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand was driving when he was assassinated in Sarajevo in June 1914. That murder triggered the outbreak of World War I, and the millions of deaths and unimaginable suffering that came with it. It's not surprising, in such circumstances, that the car should become associated with an elaborate curse legend.

Spivak did not invent the "Hoodoo Car" story; early versions of it began to circulate around the mid-1920s. It may be that the story originated somewhere in eastern Europe, but the earliest account that I have been able to trace was written by an unnamed journalist in the London office of the United Press news agency in November 1926. This version of the story appeared in several American newspapers in the autumn of that year, including the *Freeport Journal Standard*, published in Freeport, Illinois (30 November 1926), and in Kansas's *Emporia Gazette* on 7 December.

In the *Standard*'s item, the Gräf & Stift was a large comfortable six-seater car, painted an attractive red that not only seemed destined to carry misfortune and disaster", but also "justified its evil reputation to the end". Pressed back into service after spending the war years in a museum, it came close to killing the Yugoslavian governor of Bosnia, and did see off its next owner, who "was found dead in a ditch with the car on top of him". The vehicle was then recovered and sold to a Transylvanian second-hand car dealer named Tiber Hirschfield.

By this time, the account went on, it had such a fearsome reputation that Hirschfield could find no buyer for it, and took to driving it himself. He was "taking six friends to a wedding in it when it came into collision with another car which it was attempting to pass at top speed. The car was completely smashed, and those who were not killed were badly injured".

The UP story, or another very like it, fairly clearly served as a basis for Spivak's "The Hoodoo Car That Started a World War". Its chief features, just to recap, were the limo's wartime career in a museum, and three later owners – at least one of whom was killed by it. The car ends the story "completely smashed" and unfit for any further service.

This version had changed considerably by the time that *True Strange Stories* had finished with the cursed tourer. The first elaboration

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ABOVE: John L Spivak went on to be a celebrated left-wing writer, but his early career included a stint producing suitable yarns for Macfadden's titles under a series of pseudonyms.

JOE KLAMAR / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: The Franz Ferdinand Gräf & Stift 'cursed death car' or 'Hoodoo Car' as it appears today: drab green rather than "devil red" and sitting placidly in the Vienna museum where it was first placed in 1914.

that Spivak introduced was to make a telling change to the car's colour – from an "attractive red" to "devil red". He also seems to have decided that the *Standard*'s version of the story was too tame. Out went the years spent in a museum; in came General Oskar Potoriek, governor of Bosnia at the time of the assassination, and the Austro-Hungarian commander on the Serbian front in World War I. In life, Potoriek proved so inept that he was replaced and retired before Christmas 1914, but – in Spivak's version of events – after taking care to "clean the blood-stained cushions and repair the bullet holes in the woodwork" of the car, he pressed the Gräf & Stift straight back into service, commandeering it to tour the front, only to see his army suffer a crushing defeat that drove him mad and into an asylum.

Spivak's account next ramps up the horror in expert fashion, passing the car on to a pair of Potoriek's staff officers, who experience an unexplained loss of control that makes them swerve into two peasants, who are crushed and killed. A new owner, General Sarkotic – who really was military governor of Bosnia in 1915 – brings in a chauffeur, who kills two more peasants in a similar accident, but survives to insist that the accident occurred when the wheel "turned by itself". The Yugoslavian governor inherits the car next, and we get significantly more details of his experiences: there are three accidents in two months, and then a fourth in which the car swerves into a tree and costs the governor a forearm.

According to Spivak, the limousine's next owner was a "Dr M Srskic" – a name that *TSS* seems to have borrowed from Milan Srškic, a fairly prominent Yugoslav politician at the time he wrote. Spivak's Srskic is "a man of science", though, killed when the car unaccountably overturns on a smooth stretch of road. After that, the Gräf & Stift passes to a Bosnian landowner, who commits suicide, and then to Peter Sveatich, an industrialist. He is lucky to survive a further accident – a head-on collision that kills one person in the other car and badly injures four others. Once again, the horror is turned up a notch. According to Spivak's version of events, the car "seemed to jump – literally to jump" into the path of the oncoming vehicle.

By 1926, the limousine had been repaired again and passed into the hands of a Swiss racing driver, "Monsieur Blunti", who dies in another head-on crash, this one in a high pass through the Dolomites that drives the other vehicle involved over a cliff, killing all its passengers. Spivak's account concludes with the cursed car passing into the hands of Tiber Hirschfield. Like the *Standard*, he has the "gorgeous, fiery" car wiped out in one final bloody disaster involving a wedding party. In Spivak's revised version of events, however, the Gräf & Stift kills five of the six wedding guests – and it appears that the lone survivor is allowed to live solely to recount the terrifying detail that the accident occurred because the cursed limo "physically leapt" into the path of the approaching car.

In Spivak's telling, then, the number of accidents involving the Gräf & Stift is more than doubled, and the death toll rises from fewer than five to well over a dozen. Even more significantly, perhaps, the cursed car acquires a sort of sentience – apparently, the reader is led to suppose, as a result of the leading role it played in the horrific chain of events that saw Europe slide into war.

THE LEGEND LIVES ON...

If we compare Spivak's version of events with accounts of the cursed car that began to appear in other works years later – most influentially in Frank Edwards's 1950s fortean potboiler *Stranger Than Science*, and most elaborately in a *Weekly World News* spread dating to April 1981 – a couple of things are immediately apparent. One is that many of the innovations introduced by *True Strange Stories* have been retained in these later accounts; the story as it's told today still moves from Franz Ferdinand to Potoriek to two staff officers who kill two peasants, the car still costs the Yugoslavian governor an arm, and the tale still includes the disastrous deaths of a wedding party.

But it's equally obvious that some of the fine details that Spivak introduced have been lost along the way. Monsieur Blunti becomes merely an unnamed "Swiss racing driver", Dr Srskic gets passed over, and – perhaps most intriguingly – the vehicular sentience that is the central horror in the *True Strange Stories* account gets written out.

That's perfectly consistent, it seems clear, not only with the nature of 'fake news' as we understand it now, but with the way in which stories (including folklore) have always been transmitted. Strong, memorable details get reinforced and elaborated. Incidental, overcooked, hard to recall ones wither and die.

And, all too often, nobody checks even the most basic details of the story – which may have been hard to do in the case of the lighthouse logbook from Eilean Mor, but is entirely straightforward in the case of Franz Ferdinand's Gräf & Stift. Because the fabled cursed car still exists – painted, as it always has been, a defiant drab green, not Spivak's "devil red" – in the same Vienna museum where it has sat, unmoving, since it was first placed there in the summer of 1914, before its entirely fictional rampage across the roads of the Balkans even began. FT

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

MIKE DASH is a longtime member of the Gang of Fort. He was FT's publisher for some years, as well as a regular contributor, and is the acclaimed author of the books *Tulipomania*, *Batavia's Graveyard*, *Thug*, *Satan's Circus* and *The First Family*.

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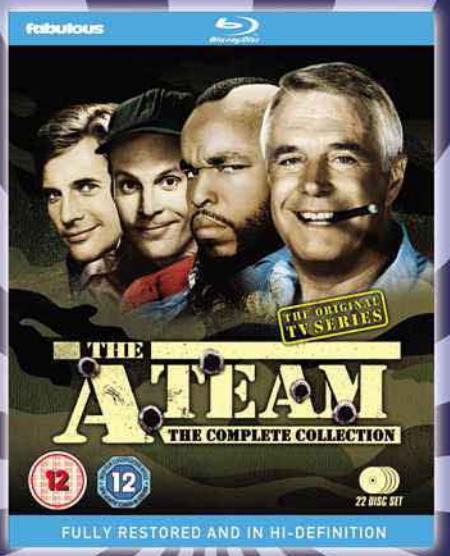

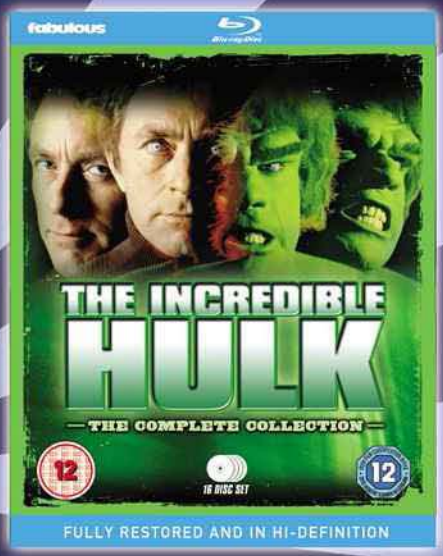

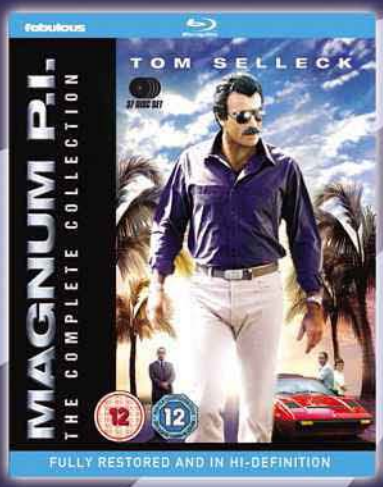

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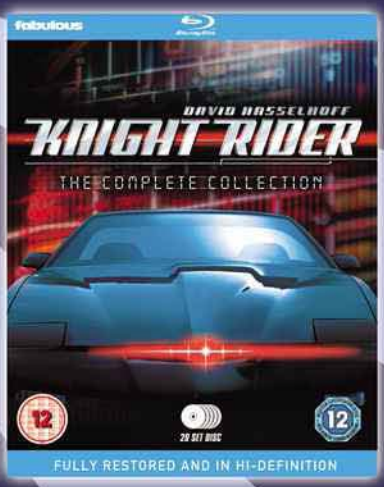

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SEARCHING FOR THE PLACE OF THE SKULL

As pilgrims descend on the Holy Land to celebrate Easter, TED HARRISON proffers a word of caution: if you're looking for the location of Jesus's crucfixion and burial then, tradition aside, you need to investigate a growing list of competing sites. Just where exactly was Golgotha?

URIEL SINAI / GETTY IMAGES

The pilgrims who today carry heavy crosses in the footsteps of Christ may all be heading in the wrong direction. Golgotha, or Calvary as it is also known, the place of Christ's crucifixion, may well not be where the guidebooks say.

Golgotha means 'the place of the skull' in ancient Aramaic. It was appropriately named as it was the place of common execution used by the Roman military occupying Jerusalem 2,000 years ago. It was to this place, according to Bible accounts, that Jesus was compelled to carry his cross on the first Good Friday.

John's Gospel says that nearby the place of execution there was a garden with an empty tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathaea. He was a Jewish elder and covert admirer (perhaps a relative) of Jesus. After Jesus was pronounced dead, his body was taken down from the cross and placed in Joseph's newly hewn tomb.

IT WAS A PLACE OF EXECUTION USED BY THE ROMANS

But where exactly was Golgotha? And where was the tomb that on the first Easter morning was so miraculously empty? To identify the very spot where the momentous events at the centre of their faith actually happened is to some Christians extremely important. Yet there are at least four theories that maintain that the locations authenticated by Christian tradition are in fact completely wrong.

ABOVE: Pilgrims carry wooden crosses in the Good Friday procession along the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem's old city. **FACING PAGE:** Thousands of Orthodox Christians gather in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to celebrate Easter with the miracle of the Holy Fire.

AMATEUR ARCHÆOLOGIST

The main tradition goes back 1,700 years to Helena, the mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine. She identified the two sites,

THOMAS COEX / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Empress Helena discovers the three crosses in a 15th-century fresco at the Church of San Francesco, Arezzo, by Piero della Francesca. **BELOW:** Turkish archæologist Professor Gulgun Koroglu supervised excavations at Balatlar church; a stone chest and wooden relics were found, which it has been suggested are related to Helena's finds.

the tomb and Golgotha, which are today incorporated within the ancient Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

For centuries, the tomb and Golgotha have been guarded by monks of several denominations, who are so argumentative and disputatious (for a particularly violent monk-on-monk brawl, see **FT244:4-5**) that they are not even trusted with the church key. The door is unlocked every morning by a member of one of two Muslim families.

Helena's claim to have found the holiest of Christian sites, though widely accepted by Christians, has often been challenged. She was a Christian convert and famed for her charitable deeds and in 327, her 80th year, she set out on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. This was not simply an act of piety – she was eager to see the places where Jesus had walked and to find tangible evidence of His life.

She found the Holy City in a sorry state: it had been ransacked by the Romans 200 years earlier. Many living there had been killed or had fled. There was a residual memory of where Jesus might have been buried, but Emperor Hadrian had built a temple on the site in honour of the Gods Jupiter and Venus.

Today, as St Helen, Helena is patron saint of archæologists, but there was little science in the way she set about looking for relics. With the guidance of a heavenly dream, she ordered Hadrian's temple to be knocked down and once it was cleared ordered her men to start digging.

Almost immediately, they found three wooden crosses in an ancient cistern. Helena was convinced they were the crosses on which

Jesus and the two thieves had been put to death, as nearby her men supposedly found the sign placed on Jesus's cross by Pilate on which was written 'Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews' in three languages. The dig also revealed nails and clothing. But which one was the cross of Jesus? The answer came when a sick woman failed to be healed after touching two of them, but was cured after touching the third.

Part of the cross was left with Bishop Macarius in Jerusalem and the rest of the finds were taken back to Emperor Constantine. One story suggests that he had the nails fixed to his helmet and made into a bridle for his horse! Today it is claimed that

there are at least 30 places where the nails, or iron from the nails, are kept. One of the nails is said to be incorporated in the Iron Crown of Lombardy kept in the Cathedral of Monza, another piece is in Rome at the church of Santa Croce (along with a thorn from the Crown of Thorns) and a third is in the Duomo in Milan and is said to be shaped like a horse's bridle.

HOLY RELICS

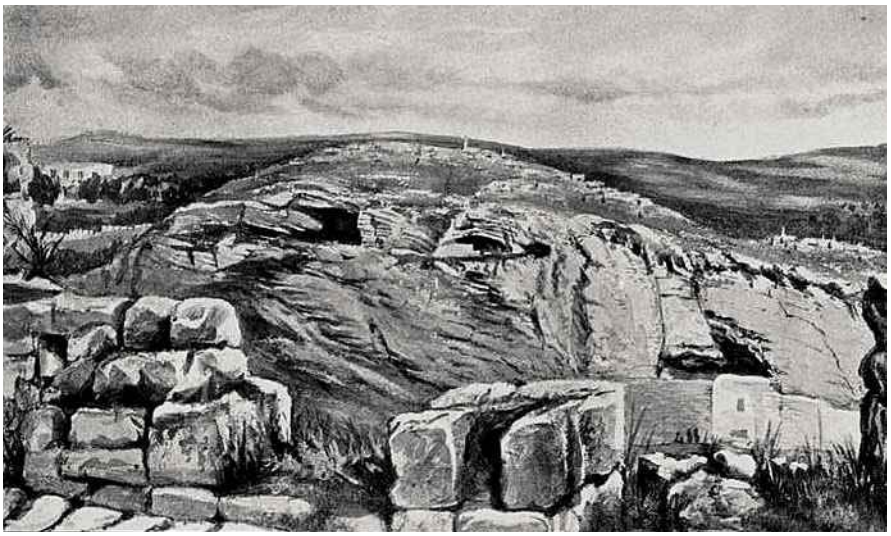
The belief that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was built over the place of Jesus's death and resurrection has been re-enforced over the centuries by stories of miracles. For 12 centuries, Orthodox Christians have claimed that a holy fire is divinely kindled in the pitch-dark tomb at Easter. The flame is then spread from candle to candle in the church to symbolise the Resurrection. The flame is taken, like an Olympic torch, around the city and wider Orthodox world. Muslims have long denounced the holy fire as a piece of trickery and non-Orthodox Christians, especially Protestants, are wary of what they see as mere superstition.

However, many Christians across the traditions have confidence in the findings of St Helen's amateur archæology, despite the fact that it was based on a nocturnal revelation rather than a ground radar survey. Pieces of the True Cross, which she identified and which confirmed to her that she had found Golgotha, are amongst the most highly prized relics in Christendom.

While some of the wood was enclosed within a statue of the Emperor, much was distributed around the Empire. Twenty years after St Helen's return to Rome, Cyril of Jerusalem wrote: "The wood of the cross has been diffused throughout the world". Before long, great prestige was attached to owning even a sliver and Roman emperors and Church authorities have, over the years, been able to buy loyalty and gratitude by giving bits away. The practice of buying and selling pieces of the Cross continued in Mediæval times. Mark Twain observed that when he toured Europe he saw enough 'holy' wood in the churches he visited to make 50 new Crosses.

The Monastery of Xeropotamou on Greece's Mount Athos claims the largest single piece, along with a number of smaller segments. On the large piece, weighing 320g (11oz), it is said that the holes made by the nails of crucifixion are visible. It is only displayed on special feast days, although a second piece is sometimes allowed to be sent away from Mount Athos to carefully selected destinations to be revered by the faithful. The True Cross, it is believed, not only has miraculous powers to heal, it also exudes a heavenly perfume (for more on holy odours, see **FT350:30-37**).

A lost fragment of the Cross was believed to have been discovered in Turkey in 2013. Modern archæologists excavating a 1,400-year-old church in Balatlar, by the Black Sea, found a stone chest that contained various artefacts they believed were holy objects. Professor Gulgun Koroglu, who was in charge of the excavations, confirmed the discovery: "The appearance of the chest suggests that it was a repository for the relics of a holy person." [1] That the wood found comes from St Helen's discovery is possible, but despite years of tradition, her claims have been widely disputed.



LEFT: Skull Hill, also known as Gordon's Calvary, from an 1897 drawing by BH Harris in *Pictures of the East: Sketches of Biblical Scenes in Palestine and Greece* (London, 1897).

THE BIBLE PROVIDES FEW CLUES AS TO THE LOCATION OF GOLGOTHA

OUTSIDE THE CITY WALL

The Bible provides few clues as to the location of Golgotha, perhaps because to the early Christians the location was well known and no detailed description was thought necessary. It was outside the city walls, says St Paul, who, although not a witness to the events, knew many of those who were. "Jesus suffered outside the gate," he wrote in his epistle to the Hebrews. Yet, to counter that evidence is the widely held view that Paul himself did not in fact write this epistle attributed to him; although an unknown author might also have had direct access to the first apostles.

As any visitor to modern Jerusalem will know, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre lies within the walls of the old town. It is reached by navigating a maze of narrow streets filled with shops and market stalls. The present-day walls, however, are not the original and were built by the Ottoman Turks in the 16th century. Two thousand years ago, the walled city was smaller. The first century historian Josephus described the route of the wall and it is clear from his account that the present-day Church of the Holy Sepulchre would indeed have been 'without the city wall'. Golgotha was not included within the city's fortified boundary until new defences were completed in AD 44 under orders from Herod's grandson Agrippa I.

St Helen's belief that the tomb and the site of the Crucifixion were in close proximity to each other is based on a single Bible passage. Only John, of the four Gospels, makes this point: "At the place where he was crucified there was a garden and in the garden a new tomb, not yet used for burial." Nevertheless, pilgrims to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre find both reputed sites so close to each other that they are under the same roof.

Even though the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is the main focus of pilgrimage for Christians and the culmination of the devotional walk known as the Via Dolorosa, historical evidence for its authenticity is very flimsy. And yet this highly questionable claim underpins the holiness of Christianity's most sacred relics and places.

SKULL HILL

In 1842 a German theologian named Otto Thenius noticed a rocky outcrop, which was identified to him as 'Skull Hill'. It has been widely believed that Golgotha got its name because it was a feature in the landscape that resembled a skull. Could this be the true site of the Crucifixion, Thenius wondered. Forty years later, General Charles Gordon was in Jerusalem and had the same idea (for more on Gordon's search for biblical locations, see **FT336:44-49**). As he was a highly respected member of Victorian society, many British people took an interest in his suggestion. Yet, not unlike St Helen, Gordon was "guided by his mystical and deep devotion to the details of the Scriptures" [2] By coincidence, nearby was an old Jewish tomb hewn out of rock, first noted in 1867 by Conrad Schick, a German archæologist and missionary. It fitted the Gospel descriptions. As a Protestant, Schick's interest was in historical research rather than finding relics, but when his discovery was linked with General Gordon's observations, the belief in an alternative Golgotha gained in popularity. The tomb, most conveniently, is in a garden, as described in the New Testament.

Thanks to the efforts of two Victorian ladies, Charlotte Hussey and Louisa Hope, the Garden Tomb Association was formally established in 1893. Purchasing the land was fraught with legal problems, thanks to a constantly changing political administration, but eventually it was bought and has since been a popular focus for Protestants. General Booth of the Salvation Army visited and preached there, as did the celebrated American evangelist Dwight Moody, who infuriated local Muslims by using a Muslim grave as a pulpit. "I have preached 30 years," he declared, "but I have never felt the awe of God as I do now."

For several decades scholars vigorously contested the claims. Sir Charles Wilson, who was in the city working for the Ordnance Survey, took a sceptical line in his 1906 book. He argued that the area in front of the supposed Golgotha had only been given its skull-like appearance during the Crusader period, when it was quarried for stone.

The garden today is a tranquil spot within a hectic city and a popular place of prayer and meditation.

GOING SOUTH

Professor Joan Taylor of Kings College London has also queried the St Helen legend: "I concluded that the evidence does not point us to the authenticity of the traditional site but rather to a site slightly further south." Through an analysis of both the four main Gospels and apocryphal writings, she questioned the proximity of the tomb to the place of execution. "The tomb is not said to be very near the site of the Crucifixion," she writes. It was further south than the traditional site, "but the traditional tomb of Jesus may very well be authentic."

The place of the Crucifixion, Professor Taylor suggests, was an oval-shaped disused quarry located west of the second wall and north of the first wall. "Jesus was crucified in the southern part of this area, just outside Gennath Gate… He was buried some 200m away to the north, in a quieter part of Golgotha where there were tombs and gardens… When Constantine captured the eastern Empire and sought to commemorate his victory with the building of a magnificent basilica in Jerusalem dedicated to the sign of the cross, local Christians could point to the site of the tomb and the Temple of Venus as a fitting building zone. The site of the Crucifixion, on the other hand, seems to have been quietly forgotten." [3]

Interestingly, Constantine's hagiographer Eusebius, in his notes on various biblical places he could still find in Palestine, wrote of Golgotha being beside the northern parts of Mount Zion. He never referred to the site of the Emperor's basilica as Golgotha.

CRUCIFIXION COP

This year, a fourth theory has emerged as to the true site of Golgotha. Bob Cornuke is the president of the Bible Archæology Search Institute in Colorado and has travelled extensively in the Holy Land examining and questioning religious sites. He dismisses the provenance of both the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Garden Tomb as being "fraught with geographical flaws". He proposes an altogether different place for the Crucifixion: namely a Palestinian neighbourhood outside Jerusalem called Silwan, which is about 600ft (180m) east of the City of David in Jerusalem. [4]

The former cop has relied on his reading of the Bible and his examination of 19th century photographs and has published his findings in a book called *Golgotha*. Previously, he has claimed to have found the anchor of the boat

BOB CORNUKE

GRANT BARCLAY / CREATIVE COMMONS

TOP: The skull simulacrum above the Garden Tomb was most likely formed by quarrying during the Crusader period. **ABOVE LEFT:** Former cop Bob Cornuke believes he has located the real site of Golgotha in the Palestinian suburb of Silwan, just outside Jerusalem. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The Garden Tomb, noted by Conrad Schick in 1867.

RODGER DUSATKO

ABOVE: Rodger Dusatko received a mystical tip-off regarding this skull-shaped mound that would, he says, "have had a close-up view of ripping of the Temple curtain".

in which St Paul was shipwrecked, Noah's Ark and Mount Sinai, where Moses received the Ten Commandments. He has also searched for the lost Ark of the Covenant.

Cornuke began his quest for Golgotha by querying the position of Solomon's Temple. It was not where most scholars believe, he claims, but about 600ft (180m) to the south. As a consequence of this, all the traditional sites of Christian, Islamic and Jewish history in Jerusalem have to be rethought, he says.

Not averse to upsetting orthodox believers, he suggests the Wailing Wall and the Dome of the Rock are not the genuine articles, and neither is the holiest sanctuary in the Church of The Holy Sepulchre.

To confirm to himself that he had found the right place, he had to see it for himself. It was, however, located in what he has described as a notoriously rough and poverty-stricken area. He encountered a hostile reception as he ventured in, but eventually met and persuaded a community leader to give him access. Before long, "I was actually standing at the foot of the stone cliffs I had come so far and had spent so much time and treasure trying to see: the cliffs of the Silwan village. I gazed up at several ancient split-open tombs, which were exactly as the Bible described! My mouth went chalk dry."

A further description of an alternative site for Golgotha comes from a Californian preacher, now based in Germany, called Rodger Dusatko. [5] He draws a list of Bible prophecies together and relies on the ancient description of Golgotha as resembling the cranium of a skull. "There is only one mount near Jerusalem which looks like a cranium, the skull-pan of a head. And this mound is only 330m (1,080ft) from where the Temple Entrance once stood." It is close by the Lion's Gate in the city walls. "From the mound it would have been possible to see the exact place on the north side of the altar where the sacrificial animals of Israel must be killed."

That the Temple was visible from the site of the Crucifixion is central to Dusatko's claim. "As Jesus died, three of the four Gospels testify that the Temple curtain ripped… it was the curtain at the entrance of the Temple. The Gospels also testify that the centurion and those with him on Golgotha saw the curtain rip. There is only one single place where those gathered would have had a close-up view of the ripping of the Temple curtain." And that would have been from the top of the skull-shaped mound Dusatko believes was the true Golgotha, just outside the eastern wall of Jerusalem.

Like St Helen, Dusatko was led mystically to the site. It was Friday afternoon on 5 June 2009, he recalls. He was sitting on a bench at the base of the Mount and heard God's words "inwardly very clearly: 'I want to show you something'. So I told those I was with, 'I must leave you for a time. But I will be back shortly'. Then the Lord directed me up the steep southern slope of Golgotha. As I was climbing, the Lord said, 'This is Golgotha'."

FOCI OF FAITH

So which of the theories is correct? Perhaps none of them – it's a pity the Gospel writers were not more specific.

Most 21st century rationalists would be very wary of accepting dreams and divine revelation as evidence. St Helen's identification of the modern Church of The Holy Sepulchre site needs therefore to be viewed with caution. But perhaps the story of the dream is a later embellishment to the story of her visit to Jerusalem; perhaps she was acting on some reliable oral history when she ordered the demolition of Hadrian's pagan temple.

Of the theories reviewed, that of Professor Joan Taylor is the only one that is not motivated by a religious enthusiasm to find a holy place. She accepts that the traditionally acknowledged burial place of Jesus may well be the correct one, but suggests the place of execution was at a greater distance from it than St Helen supposed. Once St Helen had found three wooden crosses that matched what she was looking for, there was no need in her mind to look further.

Yet does any of it matter? To many in the Orthodox and Catholic tradition and to Protestant fundamentalists it does. For members of the ancient churches, who find great comfort in the adoration of holy relics, to have the St Helen story undermined would invalidate the authenticity of hundreds of sacred objects which have become foci of faith. Fundamentalists who take the Bible literally want to be able to identify the real places where real events happened to strengthen their belief in an inerrant scripture.

Yet to millions of Christians around the world the question "where was Golgotha?" matters not a jot. Knowing the site is not in any way essential to their faith. FT

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TED HARRISON is a writer, artist and former BBC religious affairs correspondent. A regular contributor to FT, his latest book is *The Death and Resurrection of Elvis Presley*.

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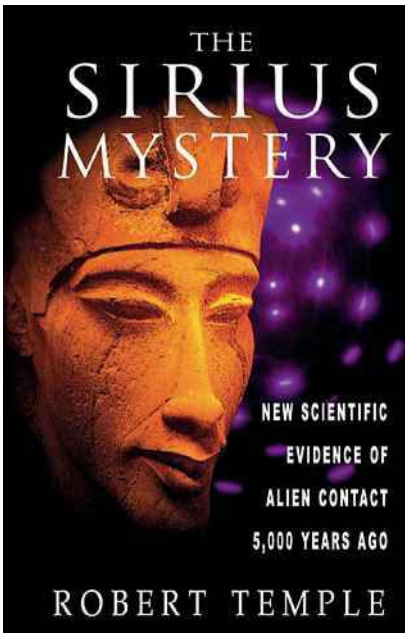
20. YOU CAN'T BE SIRIUS

There is a certain class of book that strictly speaking one needn't read and maybe even shouldn't read, lest it drive you whimpering to the safety of the apple cellar or to serial bungee-jumping or worshipping Diane Abbott, or yet worse; and yet the book remains curiously irresistible. Here we treat of one such. In 1976, Robert Temple published *The Sirius Mystery*, which as we recall was a hefty volume in black covers and none-too-large print. The book attracted both scathing criticism and a certain cult following, and a dozen years later Temple followed it with a revised and updated edition (the one we examine here) that, to its detractors, did not markedly improve on the original but lowered Temple deeper into the hole he had already dug for himself. The cult following merely expanded, if the dreaded Internet is any guide. One question the book provokes is how and/or why it should so divide opinion, although we confess that its attraction for its devotees is a mystery in itself – for reasons that will become apparent – and we won't spend too much time on that. Nonetheless, it's a book that should be in every fortean's library, as an example of how not to proceed with *any* investigation. It is a kind of tragedy, for Temple's researches are wide, deep, and appear to be erudite; his conclusions are entirely off the mark, because his premises, logical and factual, are so profoundly mistaken. A mountain of labour; a mouse of evidence – and a dead one at that.

Temple's thesis is as follows. He discovered that in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the French anthropologist Marcel Griaule had, by his own account, penetrated the innermost secrets of the lore of the Dogon, a West African tribe living south of the River Niger in Mali.

According to Ogotemmeli, his sole informant, the Dogon regarded the star Sirius – the brightest in the night sky – as central to their system of beliefs, and were aware that it had an invisible, very dense, companion. This surprised Griaule (and captured Temple's imagination) because although this knowledge was allegedly ancient to the Dogon, Western astronomers had not even speculated upon the existence of a companion star (Sirius B) until 1844, from calculations based on perturbations of Sirius A. This was confirmed in 1862 when Sirius B was first seen through a telescope. It was identified as a white dwarf in 1915, and first photographed in 1970. Yet it was central to Dogon mythology, and they knew too about its 50-year orbital cycle. So how did the Dogon learn about it?

Griaule also learned of the Dogon's secret creation myth, which involved creatures called the Nommo. These – at least in Temple's interpretation – came from the Sirius system, and were amphibious. Temple proposes that the Nommo visited Earth in the distant past, where they not only kick-started the Sumerian and Egyptian civilisations,



but provided this arcane information about Sirius B – albeit in coded form – to humans; and the Dogon had it from the Egyptians.

And that is about it, and Temple manages to fill the best part of 650 pages justifying his belief. It is exhausting stuff, full of irrelevant digressions: we get a couple of pages of Temple telling us about his acquaintance with Arthur M Young – designer of the first Bell helicopter, and eccentric philosopher – before we get to the reason why he's germane to the story. (Temple cannot bear to drop a name you may have heard of without flaunting his acquaintance with said luminary.) But it was always worse than that.

Temple provides a long introduction to his revised edition, in which he claims that the CIA have been on his case for years, trying to wreck his relationships with distinguished members of NASA, stealing manuscripts of key documents, and generally trying to ruin his career. One has to wonder why they would bother. He also expends much time and many pages on a proposal that the Nommo are currently parked on or even in Phoebe, a moon of Saturn that happens to have a retrograde orbit. He thinks it may be artificial, perhaps hollow, and is perfectly round, with "a smooth surface without craters or other lumps or bumps". It is neither. It looks (if anything) like a misshapen, much-abused potato, and there's nothing strange about its density.

Temple's odd speculations include the thought that the Mars *Orbiter* probe didn't malfunction after all, but sent back a stream of secret data about the red planet, while he says brightly of the infamous 'Face on Mars' image "it looks pretty convincing, doesn't it?" Well, no it doesn't (Temple asks many questions to which the answer is "No"), and high resolution images from a later survey proved the point. All this is in the introduction to the revised edition. Stranger things are to come.

His subtitle notwithstanding, Temple makes two fundamental scientific errors in his book. First is the classic presumption of believers in the Extraterrestrial Hypothesis that the emergence of life on other planets will infallibly result in the evolution of *intelligent* life, and scientifically and technologically accomplished life at that. There is, any sane Darwinian will tell you, nothing inevitable about intelligent life – evolution is an altogether chancy process, not a progression from 'lower' to 'higher' creatures, although some later Victorians thought so. And any half-literate student of history can tell you that the development of science and technology is the product of no

less contingent events in the culture of Western Europe (hint: Martin Luther has much to answer for). His second fundamental error is his failure to address the basic nature of the Sirius star system. Sirius itself is only about 250 million years old and may last only a billion more; and the stars themselves (one excessively hot, the other cold and dim) are well outside the age and temperature range considered conducive to life on any associated planet. Further, Sirius B's orbit is not symmetrical around Sirius A, so any such planet(s) would have an unstable orbit, such is the nature of celestial mechanics – and that's not favourable to the emergence of life either: the state of any water would be unstable too, and might well be entirely boiled away. (There is an excellent, detailed summary of all these difficulties by Prof Liam McDaid at www.skeptic.com/eskeptic/10-01-13/#feature.) Various well-informed persons pointed out these problems not long after Temple's first edition, but they seem mysteriously to have escaped his attention for the second.

The Dogon, Temple says, also have a tradition of a *third* star ('Sirius C') in the system. Of this, he says, there is now "scientific proof", basing this absolutist statement on a 1995 paper by Daniel Benest and JL Duvent, who more cautiously framed the results of their gravitational studies with the title "Is Sirius a Triple Star?" Their hypothetical candidate was a brown dwarf, and it remained (and remains) undetected. Temple had predicted a red dwarf, but let's not be picky: he had his 'proof'. Other astronomers later ran the numbers again, and questioned Benest and Duvent's conclusions. In 2013, an analysis was published of a visual search and produced the conclusion that the likelihood of Sirius C being present is extremely low (just so you know). This upsets the idea that the Dogon possessed esoteric knowledge about the Sirius system.

In his quest for how the Dogon acquired their alleged knowledge, Temple trawls through every legend and language he can think of in and around the ancient Middle East and at some points wanders as far as China. Much obsessed by Sirius B's 50-year orbit, he devotes an entire lengthy chapter to instances of the number 50, which does indeed crop up all over the ancient world, and in which he sees signs and token of Sirius B. Our take on this was to recall the non-literal biblical habit of referring to a shortish long time as 40 days (e.g. Jesus in the wilderness), and a very long time as 40 years (e.g. the Hebrews in the desert), and the modern Greek expressions '*Avrio meth' ávrio*' – literally, the day after tomorrow, but which everyone understands as 'Sometime this week – maybe'; and '*S'eíkosi 'méres*' – literally, in 20 days' time, but understood as 'No idea when, really, just keep asking.' It's been suggested that the number 50 is so common for large sets of things or people in the ancient Middle East because it's the number of seven-day weeks in a lunar year. Well, maybe. We are treated to the histories of various mythical personages' 50-strong progeny, the sowing of dragons' teeth ("And teeth are bone!" Temple exclaims triumphantly, inconsequentially, and quite wrongly) and all manner of other stuff involving the 'sacred 50'. One of the more startling conclusions Temple reaches through his backwards reasoning is that Jason and his 50 Argonauts, of Golden Fleece fame, landed up in Egypt and made their way to Mali, and are the true ancestors of the Dogon. Not a lot of people know that, and it would no doubt surprise those respectable tribespersons no end.

> "READING MADE DON QUIXOTE A GENTLEMAN. BELIEVING WHAT HE READ MADE HIM MAD."
>
> *Bernard Shaw*

Now, back to the original sources. This is where Temple really comes unstuck. Anthropologists have been, let's say, bemused that following the publication of Griaule's 1948 paper on the Dogon and their secret lore, in 1965 he (posthumously) with his student Germaine Dieterlen published *Le Renard Pâle*, which without explanation presented an entirely different account of Dogon creation myths and associated legends, based this time on four further informants. Temple does not notice the discrepancy. Most remarkable about these accounts, however, was that every facet of Dogon life was shot through with these myths and legends – making Dogon culture unique, indeed anomalous, in Africa. Naturally, this raised questions – more bluntly, suspicions – among anthropologists.

In 1978, Walter van Beek began what started as an investigation into the relation between religion and survival strategies among the Dogon. He visited the tribe for up to three months at a time over the next 11 years. "For this theme, an evaluation of the work of Griaule was a necessity," he wrote in 1991 ("Dogon Restudied", *Current Anthropology* 32:2), several years before Temple's second edition. "As it developed, it increasingly became an integrated restudy of the Dogon." Far from being central to all aspects of Dogon life, van Beek found that "Dogon religion emerged as elusive and complicated but within the range of known African religions. It has limited relevance for everyday life: for example, much of agriculture is conducted without any reference to it." More surprising, van Beek – after carefully and discreetly preparing his ground – found no one who recognised any aspect of Griaule's 'secret' lore, although many other features of Dogon culture remained intact decades after first being recorded. Contrary to Griaule/Temple's account, the Nommo are not ancestors of the Dogon, and Nommo – singular – is "often represented as one but then as an example of his kind: many Nommo people the waters. Nommo is feared as none other…." Van Beek notes that "The Dogon know no proper creation myth; neither the version of Ogotemmeli nor that of the *Renard pâle* is recognisable to informants... That Sirius is a double star is unknown; astronomy is of very little importance in religion. Dogon society has no initiatory secrets beyond the complete mastery of publicly known texts." He goes on: "Is Sirius a double star [to the Dogon]? The ethnographic facts are quite straightforward. The Dogon, of course, know Sirius as a star (it is after all the brightest in the sky)… Knowledge of the stars is not important either in daily life or in ritual. The position of the sun and the phases of the moon are more pertinent for Dogon reckoning. No Dogon outside the circle of Griaule's informants had ever heard of *sigu tolo* or *po tolo*, nor had any Dogon even heard of *erne ya tolo* (according to Griaule… Dogon names for Sirius and its star companions). Most important, no one, even within the circle of Griaule informants, had ever heard or understood that Sirius was a double star (or… even a triple one, with B and C orbiting A). Consequently, the purported knowledge of the mass of Sirius B or the orbiting time was absent."

In other words, not a trace of the 'secret lore' on which Temple builds his exhausting argument. How come, we may ask? Van Beek provides ample evidence that Griaule created narratives out of confused notes, specialised in combining leading questions with a bullying mode, and besides was well-versed in astronomy. Possibly without realising it, but perhaps not, he gave his Dogon informants all the information they needed about Sirius. The Dogon are obsessively polite and non-confrontational, and happily fed him whatever they thought he wanted to hear. It's worth mentioning too that, being human, they don't lack humour. Van Beek, for instance, recounts how he showed a 400-panel colour chart to some informants, who obligingly (and to his surprise) gave a name for all of them. They then confessed they'd made most of them up, but had fun doing it.

Which naturally does make one wonder if Robert Temple's barely readable *opus* isn't a whopping spoof as well.

Robert Temple, *The Sirius Mystery: New Scientific Evidence of Alien Contact 5000 years ago*, Century Random House, 1998.

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forum

Alien Dawn Patrol

NIGEL WATSON asks if the Red Baron really shot down a UFO 100 years ago...

NIGEL WATSON is a veteran UFO reseacher and author of *UFOs of the First World War: Phantom Airships, Balloons, Aircraft and Other Mysterious Aerial Phenomena* (2015).

German flying ace Manfred von Richtofen, the notorious Red Baron, is alleged to have shot down a UFO whilst on an early morning mission over western Belgium in the spring of 1917. According to fellow German Air Force ace Peter Waitzrik, who was flying in an accompanying Fokker Dr.1 triplane at the time, the craft resembled an upside-down, silver-coloured saucer about 136ft (40m) in diameter and bore undulating orange lights. It appeared suddenly out of a clear blue sky. Waitzrik recalled: "We were terrified because we'd never seen anything like it before. The US had just entered the war, so we assumed it was something they'd sent up. The Baron immediately opened fire and the thing went down like a rock, shearing off tree limbs as it crashed in the woods."

It was astonishing that the Baron was able to shoot down a highly advanced spacecraft; things got even weirder when two bruised and battered occupants got out of the crashed ship and ran off into some nearby woods. Indefatigable alien-hunter Scott C Waring explains the Baron's remarkable feat on his UFO Sightings Daily website: "It's possible that the Red Baron's two front machineguns could have damaged not the UFO, but the… antenna on the top centre of the craft. Not all craft have this antenna... it controls steering... If this antenna was hit by the Baron, then yes, a UFO would lose control and be forced to land to make repairs." [1]

Waitzrik said that on the return from their patrol: "The Baron and I gave a full report on the incident back at headquarters and they told us not to ever mention it again. And except for my wife and grandkids, I never told a soul." Waitzrik continued to believe that what they had seen must have been a top-secret US aircraft until the late 1940s when flying saucer reports hit the headlines. By 1999, the 105-year-old retired airline pilot felt

GERMAN FIGHTER ACE RED BARON SHOT DOWN A UFO IN 1917!

DOGFIGHT between the Red Baron and a flying saucer occurred in 1917. The UFO crashed in a ball of flame.

By JOE BERGER / Weekly World News

BONN, Germany — The flamboyant fighter pilot known as the Red Baron not only shot down 80 enemy planes for the Germans during World War I — he also was the first human in history to gun down an alien spaceship!

That's the fascinating claim of former German Air Force ace Peter Waitzrik, who says he watched in astonishment as the deadeye fighter pilot shot a UFO with undulating orange lights out of the sky over Belgium in 1917.

Then, Waitzrik says, he stared in disbelief as two bruised and battered occupants of the downed craft climbed from their spaceship and scampered off into the woods — apparently never to be seen again.

"The Baron and I gave a full report on the incident back at headquarters and they told us not to ever mention it again," the feisty, 105-year-old retired airline pilot recently told a reporter.

"And except for my wife and grandkids, I never told a soul. But it's been over 80 years, so what difference could it possibly make now?"

The aging Waitzrik said he and Baron Manfred von Richtofen — the renowned Red Baron — were flying an early morning mission over western Belgium in the spring of 1917 when the UFO suddenly appeared in a clear blue sky directly ahead of their Fokker triplanes.

"We were terrified because we'd never seen anything like it before," recalled the easygoing great-great-grandfather of five. "The U.S. had just entered the war, so we assumed it was something they'd sent up.

"The Baron immediately opened fire and the thing went down like a rock, shearing off tree limbs as it crashed in the woods. Then the two little bald-headed guys climbed out and ran away."

Waitzrik said he assumed the glittering silver spaceship was some sort of enemy invention until the flying saucer craft began in the late 1940s convinced him that his buddy had shot down a UFO.

"The thing was maybe 40 meters (136 feet) in diameter and looked just like those saucer-shaped spaceships that everybody's been seeing for the last 50 years," the awed old-timer said.

"So there's no doubt in my mind now that that was no U.S. reconnaissance plane the Baron shot down, that was some kind of spacecraft from another planet — and those little guys who ran off into the woods weren't Americans, they were space aliens of some kind.

"You know, sometimes I wonder what ever became of those guys, anyway."

105-year-old's story creates global shockwaves!

FAMED RED BARON Manfred von Richtofen is circled in the cockpit of his plane in this WWI photo. Fellow ace Peter Waitzrik is shown in circle, right.

Man shoots Siamese twin brother in head

SAO PAULO, Brazil — Beheaded Marco de Sales, 21, got so mad at his Siamese twin brother Roberto that he shot him in the head — killing them both.

A medical examiner said the twins were joined at the side and shared portions of the same circulatory system — so when Roberto died, Marco died, too. "Marco was always a little impulsive," said the twin's distraught mother Maria.

SQUEEZING TOOTHPASTE FROM THE TOP COSTS WIFE HER LIFE!

TURIM, Italy — Hotheaded hubby Franco Maligoni, 42, was charged with murder after he strangled his wife Anita — because she insisted on squeezing the toothpaste from the top of the tube.

that he had nothing to lose by going public, 80 years after the event, and concluded: "So there's no doubt in my mind now that that was no US reconnaissance plane the Baron shot down – that was some kind of spacecraft from another planet and those little guys who ran off into the woods weren't Americans, they were space aliens of some kind."

The main problem with this incredible story is that it first appeared on page 4 of the 31 Aug 1999 edition of the *Weekly World News*, better known for its sensational headlines than its accurate factual reporting. Another flaw in the story is that Fokker Dr.1 triplanes, as illustrated in the news story, were not put into operational service until August 1917. We might also wonder what happened to the crashed vehicle and its crew, which would have been conspicuous even in the middle of a battle zone. Perhaps, as Scott Waring suggests, they were able to conduct repairs and make their getaway. Sadly, they were not so lucky exactly 30 years later when they crashed again, this time at Roswell. At least the Red Baron can't be blamed for that one.

On his 'UFO Related Entities Catalog' (URECAT) website, Patrick Gross notes that this story is completely fictional. Besides the Fokker triplane error, the flying ace Peter Waitzrik would seem to be an invented character. A picture of him with his fellow flying officers in front of an Albatross D.III aircraft, as used in the *Weekly World News* story, is real enough and was taken around 23 April 1917; but the person circled as Peter Waitzrik was really Erich Lowenhardt (or Otto Brauneck according to some websites). Either way, there was no known German WWI pilot with the name Peter Waitzrik. [2]

Aviation expert Dave Homewood also demolishes the 'secret US aircraft' idea, pointing out that: "In the Spring of 1917 the US had no aircraft in the war, nor were they even at the front. The American Expeditionary Force was not even formed till July 5, 1917, and the very few Americans who'd actually made it to the front lines before then as mercenaries flew French aeroplanes." [3]

Despite these facts indicating that the story was either totally made-up or the product of (the probably non-existent) Waitzrik's imagination, it has since been repeated as fact in numerous books and on various UFO websites. As a consequence, there continues to be a belief that the Red Baron was the first man to shoot down an alien spaceship, and the event has even been re-created in a Spanish youtube video, which has attracted several thousand viewers. [4]

Oddly enough, a website called 'John Kettler Investigates' – where "the truth is earnestly sought and answers are relentlessly hunted down" – changes some details of the story. Kettler claims the craft was 125ft in diameter, not 136, and gives the date of the event as 13 March 1917. He is also touchingly concerned about the impact of the incident on our alien visitors, adding: "I get the impression that losing such a powerful craft to a veritable peashooter was so upsetting and confounding as to be almost incomprehensible. Additionally, there is a view emerging that this case may be unknown because a cover-up was performed over this incident." [5]

Even Mr Kettler has to admit the Red Baron could not have been flying a Fokker Dr.1, but he does seem to think the mysterious saucer was being operated by the infamous Grey aliens, who believed their craft invulnerable and didn't bother to "switch on the shields". Pride goes before a fall, after all. FT

NOTES

1 http://www.ufosightingsdaily.com/2016/08/germany-reports-that-red-baron-shot.html'

2 http://ufologie.patrickgross.org/ce3/1917-belgium-westernbelgium.htm

3 www.facebook.com/groups/478749618970394/

4 www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZbLG1gBN1Y

5 https://johnkettler.com/ufo-downed-by-world-war1-machine-gun/

Clones, psychics and the Antichrist

MARK GREENER asks what light delusional misidentification syndromes might shed on fortean phenomena

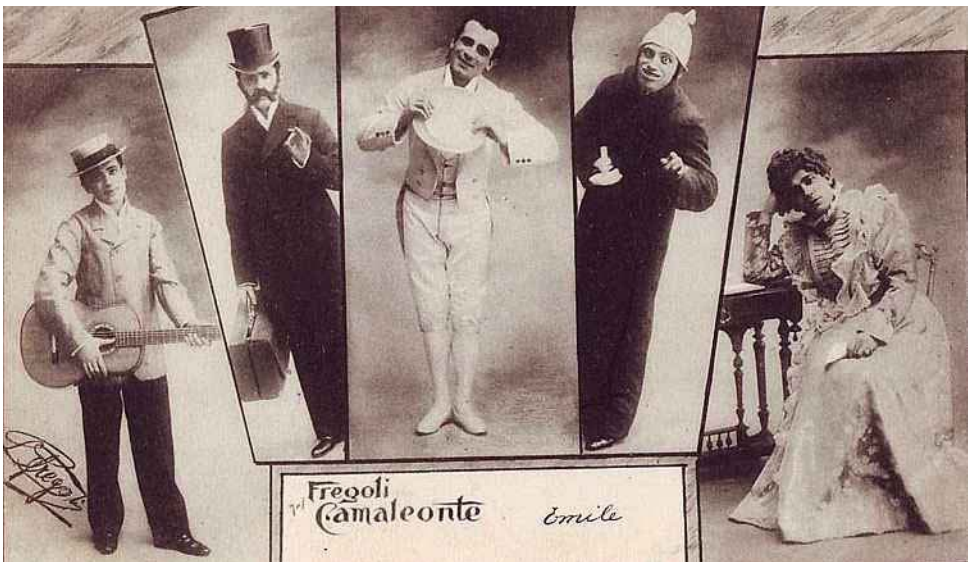
MARK GREENER is a Cambridge-based medical writer and clinical editor of *Pharmacy Magazine.* He writes regularly for a wide variety of magazines, including *Fortean Times*.

The clones, operating under the influence of the psychics, wanted to chase him from his apartment. The psychics had even replaced the three people who ran the building with clones. So, he stabbed them to death. Another man was admitted to a psychiatric unit upset because other people couldn't accept that he was the Antichrist – but the government knew. Then there's the case of the 44-year-old man who, following a brain injury, became convinced that substitutes had replaced his wife and five children.

All these are manifestations of the so-called 'delusional misidentification syndromes' (DMS), a psychiatric classification that might help explain some possessions, doppelgängers and even alien abductions. And these dramatic, poorly understood and enigmatic conditions are more common than you might expect. Fregoli and Capgras syndromes are the best studied DMS. Fregoli is, essentially, a delusion of over-familiarity. People with Fregoli syndrome typically believe that someone else changes his or her appearance or is in disguise. The syndrome's name commemorates Leopoldo Fregoli, a famous quick-change artist who performed around the turn of the 20th century. Fregoli could switch costumes and characters so rapidly that people claimed that there were several 'Fregolis'.

In 1927, two clinicians, Courbon and Fail, reported that a 27-year-old woman believed that the actresses Sarah Bernhardt and Robine, whom she often saw at the theatre, "pursued her closely".[1] Bernhardt and Robine used numerous disguises and took the appearance of "people she knows or meets". She believed, for example, that Robine regularly pretended to be her neighbour. The woman was admitted to hospital after attacking a person in the street. But she believed that Bernhardt and Robine, disguised as nurses, forced her to masturbate.

Capgras syndrome (see **FT123:14, 133:16** and this month's Necrolog, p24) is the converse: a delusion of under-familiarity. In June 1918, a woman who insisted on being called 'Mathilde de Rio-Branco' (not her real name) was admitted to a shelter for the mentally disturbed in Paris. She claimed that bandits had kidnapped several children, which they were holding prisoner in her cellar, where she could hear them whimpering. The following year, she told her psychiatrist Joseph Capgras that doppelgängers had replaced her husband and daughter. She filed for divorce, although 'de Rio-Branco' also claimed her marriage documents were forged. 'Madam de Rio-Branco' had a long history of delusions. For example, she said her mother was a descendent of Henri IV. She also said that her father had told her on his deathbed that he had stolen her from a wealthy family when she was 15 months old. She was the heir to mines in Argentina, all of Rio de Janeiro, and 75 houses in France. But these had been stolen from her. She saw doppelgängers all around her – nurses, patients, doctors – but only of people she already knew, never strangers. In other words, she recognised, but could not identify, the people and assumed they were doppelgängers.



ABOVE: Quick-change artist Leopoldo Fregoli playing multiple roles.

Capgras and his assistant Reboul-Lachaux described the condition in 1923 as *l'illusion des sosies* (the illusion of doubles). People with Capgras syndrome believe that an imposter has replaced a close friend or relative. Even blind people can suffer from Capgras: a woman believed her 'real' husband was heavier and smelt different. Similarly, a German woman believed her daughter, who had emigrated to the USA, had been replaced, based on telephone calls alone. Although his book reflects the rampant paranoia that gripped the USA during the 1950s, Jack Finney evokes Capgras syndrome perfectly in his *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*: "She was perfectly sure her husband wasn't her husband at all… he looked, talked, and acted exactly the way her husband always had" but "it simply wasn't him".

Psychiatrists now recognise numerous other DMS, some of which seem to overlap and might evolve into each other.[2] Indeed, one in 10 patients have Capgras and Fregoli simultaneously and about a third experience delusions about a person *and* a place. For example, people experiencing a type of DMS called "environmental reduplication" insist that an unfamiliar environment (such as a hospital room) is really in or near a place that is important to them, often their home.[3] In other cases, a person with DMS can feel the house has been replaced. An elderly woman who survived a stroke clung to a delusion that her house was not her 'real' home. Sometimes she packed her belongings to set off for her 'real' house.[4]

DMS seem to be relatively common, at least among some patients. One

study estimated that about one person in every 1,000 experiences Capgras syndrome, for example. The rate is especially high in patients with certain psychiatric and neurological conditions including schizophrenia, where 15 per cent seem to experience a DMS, Alzheimer's disease (20-30 per cent) and Lewy body dementia (17 per cent).[5]

DMS also go some way to accounting for fortean phenomena – although they are not the only explanation, of course – including certain cases of lycanthropy and possession. In 1978, a 56-year-old woman "behaved like a wild dog" and later developed Capgras syndrome.[6] A 49-year-old man was admitted to a US psychiatric hospital "feeling despondent" because others did not acknowledge that he was the Antichrist. At 36 years old, "he 'realised' that he was the Antichrist and began to recall his previously forgotten psychological identity". The man also "believed that the government feared his power as the Antichrist" and implanted an electronic monitoring device in his head. His doctors felt that the delusion was "consistent with a DMS."[7]

Closer to home, doctors from Northern Ireland reported a 44-year-old man who presented with Fregoli syndrome and believed that he and a female friend shared the same body – a type of DMS called delusional hermaphroditism.[8] DMS patients who develop a condition called 'asomatognosia' lose their recognition or awareness of parts of their body. So, they might believe that the doctor owns one of their limbs or speak of "my dead husband's hand".[9]

An outsider, without the benefit of modern psychiatric insights, could easily conclude that a person who believes that they are the Antichrist, shares a body or has a replaced body part, is possessed. A person with Capgras believes 'something' has replaced a loved one, which again could be interpreted as possession. Indeed, Capgras patients often regard the misidentified person with suspicion, which might evolve into paranoia and aggression. In one study, three in five (61 per cent) DMS patients had attacked someone else.[10]

Although there are numerous examples in the medical literature, DMS has proved difficult to explain. Some delusions seem to be defensive: the person projects negative aspects of themselves onto an external 'other'. (I wonder if the original case of Fregoli syndrome was projecting her frustrated and repressed sexuality.) In other cases, a person may replace a stressful environment – a hospital, for example – with a safe place, such as their place of work or home.

Arguably, this aspect of DMS could help account for some alien abductions. Perhaps some abductees project something they dislike – their frustration and anxieties, for example – onto an external environment, creating the delusion of the UFO. Interestingly, 'Madam de Rio-Branco' believed that people in a network of underground operating theatres under Paris were mutilating the city's inhabitants: replace cellars with UFOs and mutilation for implants, and this sounds familiar. Indeed, in some cases of Capgras the person is under the delusion that a robot or an alien has replaced the loved one. One person in Missouri believed an alien had replaced his stepfather, so he beheaded him to search for batteries and microfilm.[11]

Another suggestion proposed that a person with DMS might not be able to integrate memories and experiences. So, they don't recognise when something is familiar and, in response, generate delusional doubles. Yet another explanation held that the parts of the brain that process and store memory become disconnected, so new information is not linked to previous memories. This, in turn, leads to duplication. Several researchers linked DMS to brain damage that generates 'faulty information'. Other parts of the brain attempt to interpret this faulty information. The discordance between the two leads to DMS. For example, when an injured area cannot produce the appropriate emotional response to a patient's spouse, the other part concludes there is an imposter. Essentially, the damage allows an abnormal perception to go unchallenged by another brain area.[12]

Until recently, many researchers believed that damage to two parts of the brain was needed to account for DMS: one to generate the error and one to allow the delusion to pass unchallenged. But each part of the brain connects to many others. A recent study found that a single hit in an area that is linked to regions involved in familiarity is enough to generate DMS.[13] This study found that pattern of connectivity was consistent across cases of Fregoli and Capgras, as well as misidentifications involving different categories of objects (e.g. people versus places). This might explain why the same person can develop different forms of DMS.

Finally, the findings can help understand human behaviour – including how we interpret reality. Fregoli and Capgras are devastating and dramatic diseases. But what happens when one part of the brain generates a less dramatic error that passes unchallenged? Would we even notice? Someone who can really feel that their home isn't their home or that their loved ones have been replaced is, perhaps, at one end of a spectrum. What if this happens in more subtle ways with less marked damage? DMS show, too, that memory isn't as infallible as we like to think. What does this say about the relationship between our internal mental state and the outside world? DMS show just how fragile our grip on reality really is. FT

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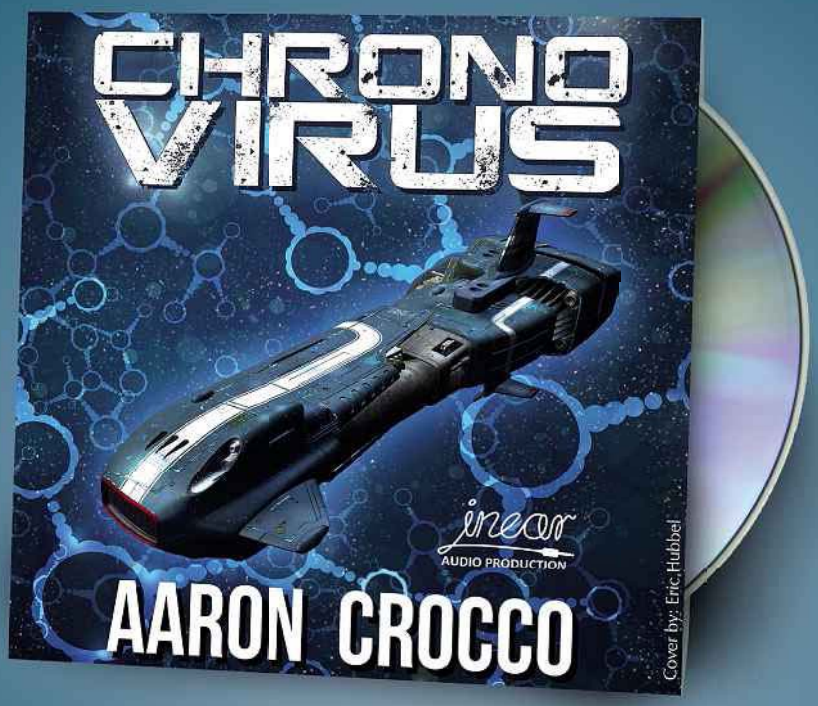

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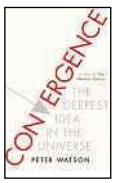
reviews

Unpredictable novelties

The natural world is a hierarchy consisting of several layers beginning with subatomic particles and ending in the ecosystem, according to new thinking



Convergence

The Deepest Idea in the Universe

Peter Watson

Simon & Schuster 2017

Hb, £25 ind, refs, £25.00, ISBN 9781471129001

Convergence is profoundly simple and simply profound – and possibly the most important book you'll read this year. On one level, Watson eloquently demonstrates how the sciences overlap, converge and support each other, so "discoveries in one science can quickly lead to advances elsewhere". More fundamentally, he argues that there is "an emerging order – a convergence, even a kind of unity – between the sciences" and that "this order or unity" gives science "an authority unrivalled among other forms" of knowledge. Despite the seeming complexity and chaos of the world around us, the "deep order" revealed by science is "so strong" and "so coherent" that it is beginning to impinge on philosophy, morality, history, culture and politics. In other words, the implications of convergence go far beyond the laboratory bench.

Watson marshals examples from disciplines as diverse as quantum mechanics, dendrochronology and child psychology. For instance, the principle of conservation of energy – a foundation of modern physics proposed in the 1850s – brought together insights from heat, optics, electricity, magnetism, food and blood chemistry. Darwin's theory of evolution rested intellectually on elements drawn from deep-space astronomy, deep-time geology, palæontology, anthropology, geography and biology. And Watson brings the discussion up to date with cutting-edge examples. *Convergence*, for example, eloquently examines the tension and inter-relationship between reductionism and emergence.

Reductionists break complex phenomena into more fundamental constituents. Reductionism, for example, allows physicists to characterise the Higgs Boson and other elementary particles, and offers molecular biologists an unprecedented understanding of the pathways inside our cells that are essential for our health and wellbeing. It allowed pharmacologists to develop important new drugs for cancer and other serious diseases.

Yet reductionism doesn't tell the whole story. As Srdjan Kesic comments in an insightful recent paper (*Saudi Journal of Biological Sciences* 2016;23:584–591): "It would be impossible to explain the functioning of a biological organism using only physicochemical principles". The newer idea of 'emergence' aims to addresses these concerns by assuming that the natural world is a hierarchy consisting of several levels beginning with subatomic particles and ending in the ecosystem, biosphere and so on. Each level, Watson notes, has certain "unpredictable novelties" – such as mental functions, consciousness and life – that do not appear in, and cannot be predicted from, the lower levels. It's important to recognise that these emergent properties do not break the laws of physics. Rather emergence adds layers that are as fundamental as those below in the hierarchy.

> "In other words, the implications of convergence go far beyond the laboratory bench"

Increasingly, however, understanding individual layers – let alone the interactions between them – involves some fairly sophisticated mathematics. Analogies (such as visualising the curve of space-time as the skin of a balloon) can aid understanding. But, sadly, the increasing reliance on mathematics will increase the divide between science and the public – as well as, I suspect, between disciplines. I can, usually, cope with the statistics and mathematical models used in my discipline, biology, but I don't pretend to grasp the mathematical basis of quantum mechanics. That's one reason why accessible books such as *Convergence* are so important to the general public and for other scientists.

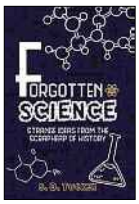
Fundamentally, I suspect a convergence forged through reductionism and emergence will eventually emerge across the sciences – but it will be a long-time coming. As Watson notes, some critics suggest that certain sciences (electronics and cultural anthropology, for example) are too far apart to allow any meaningful convergence. Of course, scientists will be able to use emergence and reductionism to gain insights and make technological advances. But true coherence between, for example, the physics of how a laser plays a CD and why I chose to listen to Slayer's 'Repentless' while I wrote this, won't, I suspect, happen in the foreseeable future. Some fundamental issues withstand both reductionism and emergence. We can't, for example, understand consciousness from the interaction of nerves and chemicals, let alone fundamental particles. Indeed, Paul Verschure commented recently that "understanding the nature of consciousness is one of the grand outstanding scientific challenges". One fundamental problem, he notes, is developing a verifiable means for observers to assess someone else's subjective experiences (*Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 2016;371:20150448). I'm sure we'll soon model consciousness in an analogous way to how we model life and be able to define consciousness and life in operational terms. We won't, I suspect, capture the essence of consciousness and life – and reach accepted definitive definitions of either – in my lifetime.

Meanwhile, science is attacking bastions that were once preserves of philosophy, religions and poetry, which raises important ethical concerns. Genetic advances raise the prospect of parents choosing their child's characteristics – which could involve traits that are passed on to future generations. Watson notes that such advances raise important questions. What will this do to our sense of being? Will people become things rather than beings? Will this challenge

Continued on page 62

Fail again. Fail better.

A non-scientist's book on science's forgotten cul-de-sacs attacks straw men and fails to note the path from failure to discovery



Forgotten Science

Strange Ideas from the Scrapheap of History

SD Tucker

Amberley Publishing 2016
Hb, 320pp, ISBN 9781445648378

Tucker's previous book was on *Great British Eccentrics*, and this one is really Great (Vaguely) Scientific Eccentrics. Science is presented as a freak show in which we are invited to ridicule absurd beliefs. The problem is that absurd beliefs often turn out to be true. "We are all agreed that your theory is crazy," physicist Neils Bohr famously told his colleague Wolfgang Pauli. "The question that divides us is whether it is crazy enough to have a chance of being correct."

Tucker mocks 18th century 'cow house therapy' with the patient living alongside cows, but later admits that harmless cowpox from cows turned out to be an effective inoculation against smallpox. He laughs at Galvin's followers for seeking to revive corpses with electric shocks, but mentions that defibrillators restart hearts with the same effect. Early experiments with blood transfusion between humans and animals were ridiculous… but paved the way for life-saving transfusion.

The conventional view of science is that it progresses, and mistaken ideas are replaced by new theories backed by experimental data. Tucker is having none of this: he attacks the 'myth of progress'. This frequently shades into attacks on the idea of social progress, which he sees as a delusion perpetrated by "liberal humanists", an amorphous group located somewhere to the left of centre. There is plenty of heat, but little light. Tucker has fun with the many eccentricities of Soviet, Nazi, Islamic and even feminist science ("Still, what do you expect from a woman?" he quips daringly). In spite of these lessons in how the political distortion of science breeds monsters, Tucker denies that liberal democracy may produce better science. As evidence, he advances the fact that North Korea has atom bombs and liberal Scandinavia does not.

The book weaves around uncertainly, often with no very obvious connection to science. The stranger ideas of mystics, Creationists, homeopaths, Wilhelm Reich and even Strindberg are aired, however unscientific they might have been considered when first expressed. The section on hoaxes perpetrated by *Brass Eye* show the public ignorance of science, but has little to do with science, forgotten or otherwise.

Modern science comes in for numerous attacks: if science from centuries ago turned out to be wrong, so may our present ideas. Tucker does not deny climate change – unlike every other topic, it is "beyond the capacity of laymen" so he cannot comment. He is suspicious of climate change scientists. He scorns the idea that methane from cows may cause global warming without explaining why and spends half a page on a joke story from the *Sport* newspaper about climate change making breasts bigger, suggesting that this is on the same level as research on the effects of methane from livestock. He declares that science is a modern religion, an idea that is hardly original and given no new support. Even Tucker has to admit that it is self-correcting, though it may take a while.

Apart from liberal humanists and their insidious belief in social progress, Tucker's other pet hate is immortality. He sees the idea that it may be possible as a myth peddled by the religion of science, and seems genuinely disturbed that anyone might achieve it. Some of this fire is directed at those who wish to upload their brains to computers. Again, he gives no indication of why their ideas are wrong, beyond the fact that previous attempts at immortality have failed. It would be unfair to observe that there were many failures before success was eventually achieved with powered flight, because this would imply some sort of progress. Tucker gives approving mentions to pseudoscientist Rupert Sheldrake, mainly because Sheldrake annoys scientists. He does not look too closely at Sheldrake's own, widely-rejected work. He describes Russian biologist Paul Kammerer's theory of Seriality as "basically incomprehensible", when it resembles Sheldrake's idea of morphic resonance, that nature has a memory.

Tucker is not a scientist, and many of his statements do not stand up to scrutiny; for example, how is harnessing insect power perpetual motion? He criticises Tesla for believing that lighting can cause downpours, when this is widely accepted by meteorologists. A section on Paligenesis that looked good was largely borrowed from *FT*. Science is a bizarre and wonderful field. Scientists have strange ideas about some things, just like everyone else. But an openness to new and crazy ideas is a rich source of discovery, and this book does a disservice to science and scientists, especially those on the further and more interesting shores.

David Hambling

Fortean Times Verdict

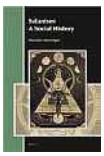
AMUSING BUT UNFAIR TO SCIENCE AND SCIENTISTS **6**

Satanism

A Social History

Massimo Introvigne

Aries Book (Book 21)
BIB STUFF €197 / $255 ISBN 978-9004288287



Satanism: A Social History is an (intentionally?) 666-page long text by Massimo Introvigne, professor of Sociology of Religions at Pontifical Salesian University in Turin, and the founder of the city's Centre for Studies on New Religions. Here, Introvigne traces the often ambiguous history of Satanism and anti-Satanism from its arguable – and unclear – beginnings in 17th century France to the similarly vague post-everything iterations of our era. The lack of clarity is not the fault of the author, whose research is authoritative and meticulous (though his prose frequently undermines its titillating and often dark content); rather, it is the result of the history of Satanism itself.

Satanic practices take place away from the prying eyes of the public and especially of the clergy, who comprised the majority of the literate populace able to record history in its early stages. Introvigne attempts to define what Satanism is (the worship of Lucifer by organised groups using ritualistic practices, which Introvigne describes as occult Satanism) and what it isn't ('Romantic' Satanism that uses Satanic imagery for largely political, literary or artistic purposes, which he calls rationalist Satanism). For rationalists, Lucifer evokes an individualist spirit that has thrown away the shackles of moral and religious dogma (think Milton's French Revolution-inspiring Satan in *Paradise Lost* or the idealist of Blake's 'Marriage of Heaven and Hell'). Occultists view Satan as a living entity whose powers can be harnessed through ritual or magic for earthly influence or hedonism. These rituals often involve perversions of Christian – usually Catholic – rites, frequently committed by men of the cloth, who were familiar with religious practices and whose authority allowed them

to perpetrate these (typically sexual) crimes undetected.

Introvigne structures his book around a "three-stage pendulum model", tracing Satanist movements from their occult beginnings, when secret practices were made known to the larger culture that repressed this perversion of religious practices in order to retain social – and largely religious-based – cohesion. He comments on similar contemporary responses to Satanists' perceived threat to social cohesion.

Introvigne's tripartite structure encompasses the 'Proto-Satanism' events of 17th and 18th century Europe and Russia. The second part also addresses the 'Classical Satanist' period, which he dates between 1821 and 1952, ending with Jack Parsons and Scientology founder L Ron Hubbard's Aleister Crowley-inspired attempt to conjure up the Thelemic goddess Babalon. (It is a testament to Introvigne's lacklustre prose that these events are drained of their peculiar humanity).

Finally, Introvigne gives us 'contemporary Satanism' from 1952 to the present, which has the merit of making sense of a chaotic era. Satanism has splintered into factions, ideologies, and sociocultural expressions and interpretations, from Anton LaVey's Church of Satan, the Great Satanist Scare and alleged ritual sexual abuse in the United Kingdom and the United States in the 1980s and 1990s that provided endless talk show and tabloid fodder, to current cultural expressions such as Black Metal.

Introvigne is a painstaking researcher; there are dozens of fascinating and obscure events in these pages. A 61-page bibliography and two indexes are included. The lack of illustrations is a disappointment, especially considering the numerous examples of ritualistic practices and the intriguing characters and events described. At $255, the exclusion is even less forgivable.

Eric Hoffman

Fortean Times Verdict

GOOD RESEARCH LET DOWN BY LEADEN PROSE – AND IT'S PRICY **6**

Sonic youth, London

Three decades' worth of idiocyncratic images of David Tibet and his fellow underground explorers are infused with affection

Skipping to Armageddon

Photographs of Current 93 and Friends

Ruth Bayer

Strange Attractor Press 2016

£25, ISBN 9781907222450 BIB DEETS

Mystic, visionary and sonic pioneer David Tibet has been charting a distinctive path through British music for the past three decades with his band Current 93 and its offshoots; a body of work recently given critical evaluation in David Keenan's *England's Hidden Reverse: A Secret History of the Esoteric Underground*, also published by Strange Attractor. For nearly all of that time, Austrian-born photographer Ruth Bayer has been carefully watching him through her lens.

They first met in 1987, when David took over Ruth's old room in a house in Tufnell Park, north London. She had just begun to study photography and "the young man in leather trousers and sunglasses" she met as the new tenant became an enduring subject. This beautifully produced volume is a tender testament to their friendship that chronicles the relationships forged between Tibet and his kindred spirits ever since.

Subjects include Steven Stapleton of Nurse With Wound, depicted lying companionably with Tibet on the floor of Ruth's bedroom. She was in the midst of some interior decorating, so it seemed the easiest place to shoot them: "Then it just became something else, them upside down, lying next to each other and then holding hands," she recalls. As author Michel (*Under the Skin*) Faber notes in his introduction, these two pioneers of experimental industrial music here resemble tired children resting after an afternoon in the playground.

There are further, arresting shots of the remaining axis of Keenan's Esoteric Undergound: Peter 'Sleazy' Christopherson and John Balance of Coil, emerging from their dressing room to take to the Royal Festival Hall stage looking, as Ruth puts it: "like some extraordinary Apollo astronauts on their way to the moon!" Now that both have departed this mortal plane, the humour and affection of these candid shots feel particularly moving.

There is a timeless quality to the collection that reflects its subjects' interest in mystical matters and Ruth's understanding of that.

The largest group shots, taken on Hampstead Heath for the cover of Current 93's *Earth Covers Earth* on a long summer's day in 1988, depict a renegade bunch, perhaps a band of travelling minstrels or a circus troupe who could have wandered in through a portal in time. Similarly, the intimate shots of Coil/Cyclobe's Stephen Thrower and Ossian Brown, taken in their seaside cottage in Sussex, could represent a scene that awaited Ralph Vaughan Williams when he went in search of sea shanties in East Anglia, a century before. Although none of this appears at all stage-managed.

"None of them were taken in a studio environment," Ruth says. "They all were either in my space or in theirs inside, in my garden or theirs or in parks; and I think the people themselves are sort of timeless. They dress in their own alternative way and have their own style, I think that's why I'm so fascinated by them."

You can see her point: idiosyncrasies vary from Rose MacDowell's red rubber and black beehive combo to a tweedy Tiny Tim wielding a ukulele, but her subjects can never be mundane. Ruth cites one of her inspirations as Billy Name, the photographer and lighting designer who captured and catalogued Andy Warhol's inner sanctum. Her shots of Annie Anxiety, a fellow aficionado, were deliberate nods to his work.

"The one of her wearing a silver outfit is a reference to when Billy Name wallpapered the Factory in silver foil; and the one taken of Annie on the bed was in homage to Edie Sedgwick, with the hairstyle and really big eyes made up with eyeliner. I have actually photographed Billy Name. They always say never meet your heroes, but I got on very well with him."

Perhaps the most iconic is the shot which graces the front cover of *Skipping To Armageddon*, in which Tibet sits surrounded by his enormous Noddy collection. Infamously the result of an acid trip in which he saw Enid Blyton's cheery wooden tot crucified in the sky surrounded by mocking elves, this obsession was something that initially left Ruth nonplussed.

"Since I come from Austria, I had no idea what Noddy is, what he represented, or that he was from a children's TV programme. Because Tibet is quite an eccentric character anyway, I just thought it was him collecting strange figures with blue hats on!" Endearing, unsettling, and enigmatic, it captures the essence of their collaboration. "He is very trusting in letting me photograph him the way I do," Ruth surmises. "There don't tend to be any boundaries between us."

Cathi Unsworth

Fortean Times Verdict

THE ESOTERIC UNDERGROUND MEET THEIR NICO **9**

Continued from page 59

our conceptions of autonomy and freedom? Should we intervene in evolution or leave it to nature?

Moreover, some scientists believe that mental states will eventually be explained by lower level neurophysiological processes. Strong advocates of this perspective believe that concepts such as "'intend', 'love' and 'consciousness' do not refer to anything real and will eventually be replaced as neuroscience progresses". I'm reminded of Samuel Johnson's reaction to Bishop Berkeley's "ingenious sophistry" (matter doesn't exist and everything is an idea). James Boswell observed that the idea was "impossible to refute". "I never shall forget the alacrity with which Johnson answered," Boswell wrote, "striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it – "I refute it thus." I feel the same about the idea that lower level neurophysiological processes will explain certain mental states – the people I love and those I loathe, my passion for music as diverse as Cat Stevens and Darkthrone, or interest in robust science as well as the outer reaches of forteana. And I am not sure I want them to. But those who adhere to the strong view would condemn my response as hopelessly emotional, sentimental and unscientific.

Such discussions could have been heavy-going, but Watson makes obtuse science accessible. He does a remarkable job of explaining relativity. His eye for telling detail brings the story to life and often reminded me (and I mean this as high praise) of Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Nearly Everything*. *Convergence* is up there with the classics of popular science. A brief review can scarcely do justice to this essential book.

Mark Greener

Fortean Times Verdict

A SIMPLE, PROFOUND AND PARADIGM-SHIFTING WORK **9**

Fever-dreams

A guide to the oddly unfamiliar European-flavoured Gothic cinema is very welcome

Euro Gothic

Classics of Continental Horror Cinema

Jonathan Rigby

Signum Books 2016

Hb, 344pp, illus, £24.99, ISBN 9780957648159

Jonathan Rigby is the author of the acclaimed film histories *English Gothic* and *American Gothic*. *Euro Gothic* continues the series with a study of horror fantasies ranging from Weimar Germany's Expressionist reveries to the transgressive nightmares smuggled past Franco's regime via surrealist Gallic fever-dreams and psychedelic shockers from Cinecittà. Rigby's insight will be familiar to readers of his earlier works and viewers of the series *Horror Europa* (2012, BBC4) he and Mark Gatiss created.

The end result is another absorbing chronicle of one of cinema's most enduring but misunderstood genres, ranging here from the silent films of the early 20th century to the video revolution of the Eighties. Many readers will be less familiar with the 100+ films here than with those in Rigby's previous texts, making it arguably less intriguing and a more difficult read, but the excellent design – and Rigby's infectious enthusiasm – make it enjoyable.

Richard Thomas

Fortean Times Verdict

MUST-READ FOR FANS OF ONE OF CINEMA'S LEAST FAMILIAR GENRES **8**

Haunted Skies

Preserving the Social History of UFO Research; Vol 1, 1939–1959

John Hanson & Dawn Holloway.

Haunted Skies Publishing,2016,

621 pages, paperback.

This "revised and expanded edition" takes a visual journey through British UFO sightings from 1901 to the end of the 1950s. It includes a sprinkling of important US cases and looks at how John and Dawn got involved, following the sighting of a huge saucer-shaped UFO over a suburb of Birmingham in January 1995.

Feeling that the subject was often met with derision, they decided to track down retired UFO investigators to gain accurate information from their files and from the witnesses. This research eventually became the basis for their *Haunted Skies* series of UFO histories. As John puts it, "Our books are not wild unsubstantiated fairy stories – but the real thing! These are unique experiences from so many people who just want to tell it how it was."

Many of the sources are gleaned from *Flying Saucer Review* (*FSR*), such as the first 20th century sighting in Bournbrook, near Birmingham. An anonymous witness recalled that in 1901, aged 10, he came across a strange building near his home. Two small military-looking entities emerged and when they re-entered it, it shot into the sky; 78 years afterwards, he thought he might have seen a UFO. The authors tried tracking down his family for more information, but have so far failed. They were more successful in finding a relative of Agatha Whiteland, who witnessed a flying platform carrying another set of military-looking occupants at Aldeburgh, Suffolk, during WWI.

The information about British UFO sightings before and during WWI cover the basics, as they only mention a few 1909 cases and ignore the 1912–13 airship scare completely. In my biased opinion, readers can best find these details in my book *UFOs of the First World War* – just saying! *Haunted Skies* gets fully in its stride, when it covers another *FSR* report about a tennis-ball-sized globe of light seen by a teenaged Thomas Hills Harrison in 1919. Like most of the cases that follow, the authors have spoken to the witnesses and/or prime researchers, and include photographs of them and any other relevant images and documentation.

There is even a 1929 case, investigated by Ron West, involving an alleged abduction in Yorkshire. Merchant Navy officer William Anderson saw a ball of light that led him to a domed craft that had landed in some open farmland. He went inside the craft where he undressed and after a memory lapse found himself on an examination table. He was telepathically told that they were always around if he needed any help. The next thing he knew was waking up in his bed the next morning.

Extensive coverage is given to the story of Cathie Connelly who had a close encounter in Warwickshire in 1940, which had intriguing similarities to the Betty and Barney Hill case.

The book provides a wonderful review of sightings in WWII, many by RAF and military personnel, and then goes on to the 'proper' flying saucer era that began in June 1947. Here the multitude of British cases are put in the context of milestone US incidents, and again there are several close encounters with UFOs and entities.

One of the stand-out cases is that of Cynthia Appleton, who met spacemen in her living room, and attended a packed lecture in Birmingham by the (in)famous US contactee. A month later, Cynthia said she was expecting a Venusian's baby. Even Adamski could not have come up with such a far-fetched story.

With its wealth of newspaper clippings, the tales of ancient ufologists and images of long-defunct UFO magazines, you do get a real feeling for the period when ufology was in its innocent infancy. Where did it all go wrong!

Nigel Watson

Fortean Times Verdict

AH, THE LOST INNOCENCE OF THE BRITISH UFOLOGY SCENE... **9**

ALSO RECEIVED

We leaf through a small selection of the dozens of books that have arrived at Fortean Towers in recent months...

Atlantis in the Caribbean

Andrew Collins

Bear & Co. 2016

Pb, 488pp, illus, plates, notes, bib, ind, $20.00, ISBN 9781591432654

It is difficult to see where there might be room for a new book on Atlantis but Collins has done just that, re-examining all the most ancient and authentic records and distilling a (relatively) new theory.

To locate the legendary island-continent in mid-Atlantic, as so many of the older writers have done, is clearly ruled out by modern studies of the tectonic plates that form the ocean's floor. Instead Collins marshals considerable evidence that the Caribbean is a better prospect, arguing that Plato's reported account was a memory of a cataclysm that struck this area at the end of the last Ice Age, some 13,000 years ago when a cometary impact devastated Cuba and submerged parts of the Bermuda landmass.

This is a revised and expanded edition of his 2000 book *Gateway to Atlantis*, published when, he admits, "very little scientific evidence was available". Since then, he has trawled libraries and travelled the world seeking evidence of the Younger Dryas comet impact, finding it in six continents among the remains of ancient cultures in the Old and New Worlds. The theory is clearly explained and the evidence well laid out. It is refreshing to see the way Collins has matured as a writer and historian; this must be his best book yet.

Dying to Wake Up

Dr Rajiv Parti

Hay House 2016

Pb, 222pp, £10.99, ISBN 9781781807262

Standing out from the glut of autobiographical accounts of near-death experiences (NDEs) is this from Dr Parti, a self-confessed rich materialist who had heaped psychological abuse upon his son for not being as successful as himself.

Parti was a respected Chief of Anaesthesiology at a California hospital whose struggle with iatrogenic complications of treatment for cancer led to a series of surgical interventions and a dependency upon pain relief medications and anti-depressants.

During a near-fatal crisis at Christmas 2010, he was once again on an operating table when, 20 minutes in, he became conscious that his body was floating near the ceiling and was fully aware of the actions and conversation of the theatre staff below him. In an instant, he found himself in a frightening, dark place and crying for help. A figure appeared, whom he took to be his long-dead father, now looking younger and confident, who calmed him and took him through a tunnel. The doctor then experienced two past lives which, he says, put his present predicament, his arrogance and cruelty, into a perspective. Attending angels then tutored him, telepathically, in spiritual health, giving him the mission to teach it to others. Dr Parti awoke a changed man, giving away his material wealth and mending bridges with his family. This engaging book – co-written by Paul Perry – is Parti's testament.

Fact, Fiction and Flying Saucers

Stanton T Friedman & Kathleen Marden

New Page Books 2016

PB 288pp, notes, bib, index, $16.99. ISBN 9781632650658

You'd think that with shelves crammed with books examining or indulging in the UFO phenomenon from practically every known angle there would be no room – or, indeed, enthusiasm – for another one. The two veteran ufologists, Friedman and Marden, have cooperated before on at least three well-received books on well-rehearsed UFO topics.

Even though the cases discussed here all-too-familiar for the well-read follower of the subject, the authors have come up with an important new angle. For the first time (in general print at least) we have very experienced researchers in the field giving their considered views on how it has, historically, been hijacked by "the misinformation, distortion, and derision by debunkers, government agencies and conspiracy conmen"; consequently there is much new commentary on the old cases.

This is likely to go way over the head of any readers new to the subject, but old hands are sure to appreciate the behind-the-scenes chapters on such key figures as Donald Menzel, Philip Klass, Dr Condon, and others. They end with yet another (but no less earnest) plea for the full disclosure of government archives.

The Doctrine and Ritual of High Magic

Eliphas Lévi; trans J M Greer & M A Mikituk

Tarcher Pedigree 2017

Pb, $17.10, 480pp, ind, ISBN 9780143111030

This new translation of Lévi's 1854 classic – a personal project by Greer and Mikituk – provides a significant opportunity for a fresh re-evaluation of Levi's legacy for the philosophies underlying and interpretations of, for example, psychical research, spiritualism, and modern New Age movements.

There is no doubt that this was one of the founding manifestos of the modern Western occult tradition, considering that it preceded important works by Manly Hall and Helena Blavatsky, and the main magical movements (including the Golden Dawn, the Rosicrucians, Theosophy, etc) that flowered in their wake. A graphic example of this 'transmission', say the translators, is Lévi's illustration of Baphomet – the cross-legged transgendered goat-demon surrounded by occult symbols – that, while borrowing from the ancient Knights Templar, presented the modern world with a revised representation of the Devil as the prime-evil. In eliminating the "pompous and turgid" tone of Arthur Waite's original 1896 translation, correcting his many "errors and omissions" and dumping his system of misleading footnotes, Greer and Mikituk have succeeded in re-establishing Lévi's grand trans-cultural synthesis in a form more relevant to and understandable for the modern occultist.

Strange Tales from Illinois

Luke Scriven

Self-published, Amazon/Kindle, 2015

Pb, 99pp, £3.49, ISBN 9781537340593

FT heartily approves of the small-press tradition of anthologies of local tales, in this case, going direct to digital distribution. This slender volume for the author's home state focuses upon modern manifestations of mysterious and frightening clowns; the 1944 'mad gasser of Matoon' panic; phantom hitchhikers; and one new to us, concerning the Devil incarnating into a baby born to an atheist in Chicago in 1889.

The author then shows how variants of this old theme (of the atheist or blasphemer 'getting what he asked for') has cropped up in other countries and other times, going back to the folkloric trope of 'changelings' substituted for new-born babies.

You Might Be a Zombie

Editors of Cracked

Michael O'Mara 2014

Pb, 295pp, illus, £9.99, ISBN 9781782433200

Hundreds of witty collections of facts, factoids, rumours of the urban legend type, organised in familiar Internet-style listings around 40 topics such as: 'Five stories about Jesus' childhood they had to cut from the Bible'; 'Six insane things Science might do with your cadaver'; 'The gruesome origins of five popular fairy tales'; 'Three colors you don't realise are controlling your brain'; and 'The five most frequently quoted bullshit statistics', etc. Compiled from the contributions of 35 of the satirical website's writers and amusingly illustrated, this makes a perfect addition to your toilet library.

SEND REVIEW COPIES OF DVDS, BLU-RAYS AND GAMES TO:
FORTEAN TIMES, PO BOX 71602, LONDON E17 0QD.

A Cure for Wellness

Dir Gore Verbinski, Germany/USA 2016

On UK release

After receiving a strange letter from CEO Roland Pembroke (Harry Groener), the board members of his company order the young executive Lockhart (Dane DeHaan) to bring Pembroke back from a wellness centre in the Swiss Alps to sign off the final paperwork on an important merger. Arriving at the wellness centre, the callously ambitious Lockhart is unimpressed by the idyllic scenery; he simply wants to find Pembroke and get back to business: but the businessman is nowhere to be found. Increasingly frustrated by the centre's staff being seemingly unwilling to help, Lockhart begins to suspect that something is terribly wrong with this place. When he wakes with a broken leg after a freak accident, he continues his search for Pembroke, but his quest is soon overshadowed by the increasingly sinister discoveries he makes around the facility.

Gore Verbinski can hardly be considered a consistent filmmaker, with flops such as *The Lone Ranger* on his résumé, but something he always seems to get right are the stunning visuals. Among his better work was the 2002 American remake of *The Ring*, which showed that not only does he know how to make a film that looks good, but also how to create mesmerisingly unnerving imagery – and there is plenty of nightmare fuel in *A Cure for Wellness*. With this latest effort, Verbinski has made an original piece of gothic horror and, despite its dark subject matter, another stunningly beautiful film. The cinematography, editing and colour grading all help to create lusciously serene visuals in deceptively soothing shades of blue, and the excellent sound design matches the imagery so well that it can almost be considered a character in its own right.

Just as the visuals have a beautiful, dreamlike quality, the hefty runtime of 2 hours and 26 minutes is used to further create the sense of being inside a waking nightmare; not only does the film's length provide the opportunity to drag the viewer ever deeper down the disturbingly dark rabbit hole that is its story, it also creates a sense of time being warped because we are not constantly jumping from scene to scene. Naturally, the mere fact that a horror film is this long will be reason enough for some moviegoers to give it a miss, but if you are willing to keep an open mind as you go along for the leisurely ride, there is a good chance that you will be enthralled by the storytelling. By allowing the film to linger on seemingly insignificant elements, a greater sense of mystery is achieved, which in turn makes the film that much more unsettling, even when Lockhart is doing something as simple as hobbling around on his crutches.

Even though the film does an impressive job of building a tremendously sinister and mysterious atmosphere, the final act is ever so slightly disappointing. The story struggles towards the end, although this may in part be because the film wants to take the audience, thematically, to certain places that many people do not care to visit – even in the name of horror. However, it should be said, this is not due to the body horror shown in the film; that particular brand of horror was perfected by filmmakers such as David Cronenberg, and while lesser filmmakers have overused it in recent years, here it is thankfully used sparingly, sprinkled on at intervals, ensuring that the film remains truly unpleasant without turning into another gratuitous torture porn extravaganza. But make no mistake, despite such restraint, this film is not for the squeamish.

A Cure for Wellness is one of those movies that splits both critics and audiences down the middle. Whether you love it or hate it, the fact that the film dares to be so deliriously different is commendable in the current cinematic climate, where originality tends to be shunned in favour of the financial rewards promised by reviving past successes. While the film goes places with its Lovecraftian brand of gothic horror that many people will find deeply disturbing, it never stoops to the tired horror movie tricks of jump scares and gore solely for the sake of shock value. This strange piece of cinema has all the makings of a cult classic.

Leyla Mikkelsen

Fortean Times Verdict

UNCONVENTIONAL HORROR WON'T BE TO ALL TASTES **8**

Logan

Dir James Mangold, US 2017

On UK release

After last year's extremely disappointing *Apocalypse* (where to start?), it's encouraging to see that Fox appear to have some fresh ideas for their X-properties: the recent TV co-production deal with Marvel has yielded the mind-bendingly good *Legion* and, in cinemas, *Logan* proves to be the best X-Men film in 15 years, and that by a comfortable distance.

James Mangold, who helmed the nearly excellent *The Wolverine* back in 2013, here delivers what promises to be – after the actor's public statement that he is, after 17 years, hanging up his adamantium claws – Hugh Jackman's final outing as the scrappiest of mutants. And it proves to be a fine and unexpectedly moving send-off.

At some point in the not-too-distant future we find a crumpled, weary, booze-soaked Logan scraping a living as a limo driver on the Mexican border; his healing factor is waning and he's caring for a nonagenarian Charles Xavier (Patrick Stewart) who is slipping into dementia and unable to control his powers. In a world where most mutants are dead and no new ones are being born, they hide out in an old water tower with Stephen Merchant's goggle-eyed albino Caliban (I expected to dislike him, but he's rather good), playing out scenarios of familial frustration reminiscent of Beckett by way of *Steptoe and Son*: it's darkly funny, but there are hints of a terrible tragedy that has driven them to this current dead end. The status quo is only upset when the surprise appearance of a young mutant named Laura (Dafne Keen) seeking protection from the sinister, quasi-official forces pursuing her. Reluctantly, Logan is forced to come out of retirement and confront his own past.

If it sounds a lot like a late-period Western, then you won't be surprised to find echoes of *The Shootist* and *Unforgiven*, while the classic *Shane* becomes an explicit point of reference as the film develops; Mangold's previous experience as writer/director of the Johnny Cash biopic *Walk the Line* pays off in the soundtrack too. This is also a road movie of sorts – a mutant *Alice in the Cities*? – in which the unlikely 'family' of Charles, Logan and Laura set off on a journey north to the Canadian border in search of a fabled 'Eden' where mutants can supposedly dwell in safety. The bearded Logan acts as an increasingly bloody and beleaguered Moses figure on the trek to this 'promised land', and Jackman imbues the role with sufficient world-weary nuance to make this easily his finest assumption of a role he has played across nine films and nearly two decades. Stewart nearly steals the show, though, in a poignant performance (F-bombs and all!) that must rank as one of his very best. The young Dafne Keen is also splendid as the virtually feral Laura, and I wouldn't be surprised to see her turn up again in the part. Richard E Grant is, well, Richard E Grant, but Boyd Holbrook (*Narcos*) as Pierce makes for a superbly swaggering villain, full of arrogant menace.

With its dusty landscapes, melancholy tone and themes of ageing, mortality and family ties, Logan is a very different kind of superhero movie that stands out in an increasingly crowded field, and its obsession with borders and migrations, safe havens and dangerous crossings marks it out as strangely prescient and powerfully resonant for our times. In the end, it's not the furious, bloody violence that makes this R-rated entry in the X-Men canon feel special – satisfying though it is to see Jackman finally go full beserker – but the quieter, character-driven moments that linger in the memory after the credits roll on this valedictory chapter in the Wolverine saga.

David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict
A RESONANT AND MOVING SUPERHERO DRAMA **9**

The Void

Dir Jeremy Gillespie, Steven Kostanski, Canada 2016

On UK release from 31 March

In features like *The Beyond* and *City of the Living Dead*, notorious Italian director Lucio Fulci succeeded in spite of himself in creating two genuinely nightmarish and fractured horror films. I say in spite of himself because his customary lack of narrative sense actually worked to his advantage here: the films are like a series of disjointed, hallucinatory sequences that by some miracle

SHORTS

TOWER OF LONDON

Arrow Video, £14.99 (Blu-ray)

Vincent Price was always a fan of the theatre, so it's no surprise to see him devour his role as a Shakespearean king in Roger Corman's horror makeover of *Richard III*. Desperate for power, he murders any man, woman or child who gets in his way; in fact, he kills so often that the film feels like a proto-slasher movie. It's also got its share of poster-worthy exploitation – like the child minder who gets her bones cracked on the rack in a scene that feels a little brutal, even today – but there's poetry here too, as when when Price throws out lines like "When we were children, there was no such thing as death". The black and white cinematography looks lovely too. **Rev Peter Laws** 7/10

BEYOND THE GATES

Precious Pictures, £8.99 (DVD)

Remember in the late 1980s, when board games started 'enhancing the fun' with a bundled VHS Tape? Like *Atmosfear*, where a hooded Gate Keeper glared out of the TV, screaming "YOU MAGGOT!" at petrified players. *Beyond the Gates* takes the VHS board game idea and uses it to open a portal to a hellish world of death, mayhem... and lots of pink light. Starring horror legend Barbara Crampton, the film's a little slow and not exactly inspired, but it's still an interesting attempt to recapture some of the fears and loves of our youth. Try it, you maggot! **PL** 7/10

KNIGHT RIDER: THE COMPLETE COLLECTION

Fabulous Films, £99.99 (Blu-ray)

Today self-parking, sat-navving cars that talk are pretty standard, but there's one piece of tech that modern motors have not yet attained: the Turbo Boost. Oh, and Ski Mode. Actually there's a whole bunch of things supercar KITT can do which modern cars still can't – like analyse chemicals or jam the controls of a baddie's helicopter, which makes this delightful 1980s series still feel fun and fresh. David Hasselhoff and William Daniels are perfectly cast as, respectively, the long-legged crusader against crime and the stuffy, neurotic car. All four seasons are here, sparkling on Blu-ray, so you get everything: KARR, the evil version of KITT; Goliath, the evil truck version of KITT; and GARTH KNIGHT the evil version of Michael Knight. Watch out for the bizarre Hallowe'en episode from Season 3, in which bouncy-haired KITT mechanic Bonnie is haunted by paranormal activity after seeing a woman strangled by a man in a gorilla suit. This is TV nostalgia of the highest order. **PL** 8/10

WILLIE DYNAMITE

Arrow Video, £14.99 (Blu-ray)

Meet Willie D: a streetwise, finger pistol shootin' pimp who struts through the city dressed like E.T. in that drag scene we all try to forget. He's all floppy hats and fur, looking sharp even when he's slapping his girls on money collection day. The film's keen to paint pimping as a genuine business – it's the *Wall Street* of pimp movies and, as the great wacka-wacka soundtrack proudly shouts: "It's no different from any other industry". I beg to differ. I've never, ever seen my plumber turn up in a bright pink pant suit with matching feather boa and platforms. **PL** 7/10

coincided with exactly what he was trying to accomplish, thereby creating a perfect marriage of atmosphere and theme. In *The Void* there is a similar lack of narrative control and a similar patchwork of scenes, but in this particular case they do not combine to such a successful degree.

Our hero is Daniel (Aaron Poole), a patrolman in the Marsh County Sheriff's Department. One quiet night he encounters a terrified and blood-soaked young man crawling along the highway. Daniel takes him straight to the local hospital, which just so happens to be in the process of being shut down following a fire, where the young man's arrival sparks off a series of increasingly bizarre and bloody events, which see a handful of survivors besieged by a horde of hooded cultists without, and even more monstrous terrors within.

I'll get the obvious out of the way to start with: *The Void* is one of the most derivative horror films you're ever likely to come across. So many plot lines, situations and individual shots instantly recall movies we've all seen before that you could almost call this an homage to the genre. In the press notes, the directors burble on about all their influences, citing five films in the first paragraph alone. And they ain't just whistlin' Dixie, for one could add literally dozens more to that list, each borrowed/ripped off (delete according to preference) quite shamelessly. This even extends to the cast, featuring as it does Canadian actor Art Hindle who is probably best known as the hero of David Cronenberg's *The Brood*. The net effect is that the film feels less like a discrete entity than a patchwork of cinematic quotes (and for that matter bits of video games) from elsewhere.

The other major problem is that there are at least three separate horror movies crammed into the film's 90 minutes. One is the siege; one is a doctor with a fondness for unnecessary surgery; and another is a kind of Cthulhu-esque Armageddon scenario. These elements are linked, but it's tenuous, and the directors' control of the three strands fails them in that each story reaches a crescendo too soon and with fever pitch achieved early on, the film has nowhere left to go. In an attempt to rescue the situation, Gillespie and Kostanski throw the kitchen sink at the screen in terms of blood and gore. There's too much, of course, but this is where the film does undoubtedly excel; which should come as no surprise given the duo's background in graphic design and special effects. There's body horror, transformations, shootings, stabbings, axe attacks, two births and a broken finger – plenty to keep gorehounds happy then; just don't expect any of it to be coherent.

I don't usually like to use this expression but the film feels like the directors' calling card to the industry, a plea to genre producers looking for talent. And the pair do have talent, but at the moment it is, to say the least, unfocused.

Daniel King

Fortean Times Verdict
AN EXTREMELY BLOODY MESS OF A MOVIE **5**

Get Out

Dir Jordan Peele, US 2017

On UK release from 17 March

Chris (Daniel Kaluuya) is about to visit his in-laws for the first time, but is extremely anxious about meeting them because they are white and his girlfriend Rose (Allison Williams) has yet to tell them that Chris is black. Upon arrival, his feeling of unease only increases, not just because Rose's parents inadvertently alienate him by telling him how much they like black people, but also because something seems to be terribly wrong with the black staff employed by this white family. After an intense impromptu therapy session with Rose's psychiatrist mother, things get weirder and weirder, and Chris begins to wonder if he should just get the hell out of here.

The film opens with an eerie scenario that quickly establishes a link to the tragic murder of African-American teen Trayvon Martin, and it instantly becomes clear that writer-director Jordan Peele is not afraid to address the nature of contemporary racism in his directorial debut. As the white people overcomensate in trying to reassure Chris that they accept him, it only proves that they see him as a skin colour first and a human being second. What makes this approach powerful, however, is that these are not your usual racist caricatures – they are the well-meaning liberal elite, completely unaware of their own hypocrisy. On top of the brilliantly satirical social commentary, Peele expertly taps the more conventional unease associated with horror as the film progresses, creating effective scares while unwrapping the sinister plot at the core of the film. While some of the scares may be conventional, what makes the film something special is not just how seamlessly it blends satire and horror, but the fact that the story is told from the perspective of people of colour, a notably underrepresented demographic in terms of mainstream horror. As a result, *Get Out* is an original, tense and sharply satirical horror film that is well worth the price of admission.

Leyla Mikkelsen

Fortean Times Verdict
BOLD AND SATIRICAL CONTEMPORARY HORROR **9**

Fright Night

Dir Tom Holland, US 1985

Eureka Entertainment, £19.99 (Dual format)

A first outing on Blu-ray for the original 1985 version of the teen horror comedy in which teenager Charley (William Ragsdale) comes to believe a vampire has moved in next door. Sure enough, dead bodies start turning up, but Charley can't get anyone to believe that charming Jerry Dandridge (Chris Sarandon) is the undead killer. Only his faithful girlfriend Amy and geeky pal Evil Ed will give him the time of day until they enlist the aid of local TV horror movie host Peter Vincent (Roddy McDowall), a self-proclaimed vampire killer.

Definitely one for older teens this: there's a flash or two of nudity, some swearing and some pretty gruesome horror effects from the glory days when rubbery monsters were *de rigueur*. There's an *American Werewolf*-style transformation, a *Raiders*-esque face melt and some good old-fashioned vampire bat action. What really makes it work though is that the characters are likeable and that their relationships are nicely drawn; the budding romance between Charley and Amy is especially sweet and amusing. It's elements such as these, as opposed to buckets o'blood, that makes films fondly remembered and it's a measure of this film's enduring appeal that among the special features are a cast reunion from 2008 and a lengthy documentary detailing just about every aspect of the film's production and reception. It's hard to imagine the same being done in 30 years for the recent, quickly forgotten, remake which starred the late Anton Yelchin, Colin Farrell and David Tennant. This is an excellent package and the HD transfer is good.

Daniel King

Fortean Times Verdict
EIGHTIES CLASSIC COMES UP FRESH ON BLU-RAY **8**

Seoul Station

Dir Sang-ho Yeon, South Korea 2016

Studiocanal, £14.99 (blu-ray), £12.99 (DVD)

Last year's *Train to Busan* was a smash hit in Asia but left this viewer unmoved [**FT345:60**]. It was basically 'zombies on a train' and added little to an already overcrowded genre. However, its financial success demanded a follow up, hence *Seoul Station*. The twist, if you can call it that, is that not only is it a prequel rather than a follow-up but it's also an animated feature as opposed to the live action original. Naturally for a prequel, it explores how events reached the point at which the first film began and as all zombie pandemics have to start somewhere, this one kicks off at, that's right, Seoul Station.

The story centres on a worried father looking for his escort daughter with the help of her feckless pimp, but that's just a vehicle for the running, jumping, chomping and chewing. Like its progenitor, this is a bang-ordinary example of its genre, and the novelty of animated zombies quickly wears off. It does attempt some social comment, in that the outbreak seems to begin among Seoul's homeless community, which is why no-one takes it seriously until it's too late. Slim pickings; unless you thought the original train ride was terrific there's little reason to catch this one.

Daniel King

Fortean Times Verdict
THIS PARTICULAR TRAIN IS PROBABLY WORTH MISSING **5**

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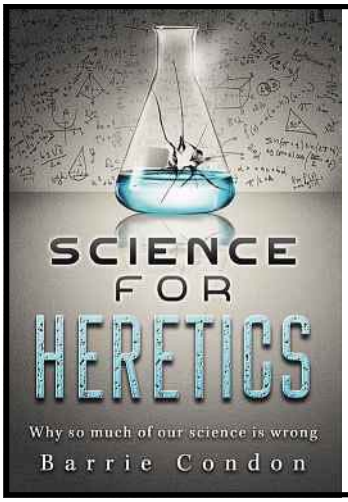

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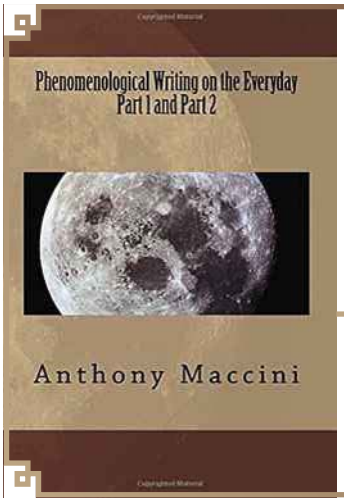

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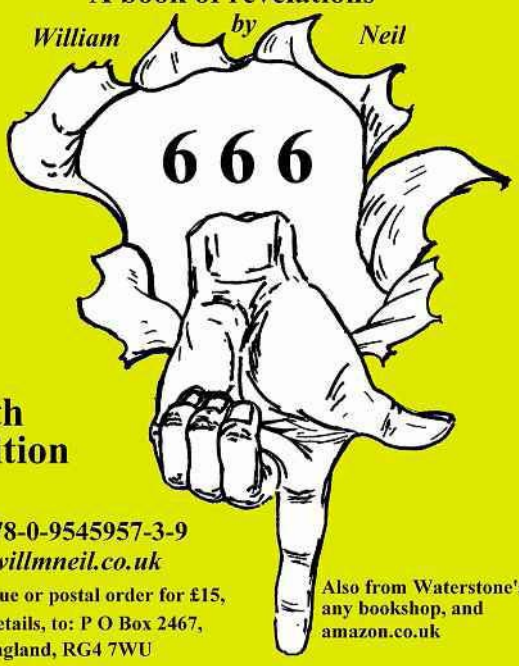

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letters

Blessing the sea

In an otherwise fascinating survey of Old Calendar Christmas customs [**FT349:38-41**], Ted Harrison misunderstands the significance of the Blessing of the Sea as practised by the Orthodox Church in Margate on 6 January each year. In the Orthodox Church, Epiphany marks not the visit of the Three Wise Men to the infant Jesus, but the Baptism of Christ as an adult in the River Jordan: it is for this reason that the custom of blessing the sea, lakes and rivers on the Feast of Epiphany has arisen in the various Orthodox Churches. This is not evidence of the confusion of Old Christmas celebrations with the Twelfth Night traditions of the new calendar.

His Eminence Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain follows the new calendar and is therefore practising an Epiphany tradition with no connection to Old Christmas, beyond its taking place on the 19th century date of Old Christmas. Old Calendar Christmas for those Orthodox Churches still rigorously following the unreformed Julian Calendar now falls on 7 January, as Mr Harrison correctly points out earlier in his article.

Alasdair Cross
St Peter Port, Guernsey

FT collage

My 12-year-old daughter Holly made me so proud by following her dad into the fortean world, all thanks to the *Fortean Times*. We can have endless discussions about the reality of ghosts.

Without my knowledge, she spent a few hours this evening making this collage of pictures from FT349. I just wanted the Gang of Fort to feel appreciated and happy that they've made a real difference to our lives.

Alex Swan *By email*

Exploiting fear

In reply to my article on a series of 1930s Afro-American monster scares [**FT337:30-31**], James Barnes objects to my description of the influence of racism on these social panics. Mr Barnes finds such an observation 'politically correct' [**FT348:72**]. I strongly believe the contrary: it is historically correct. Before me others have pointed out how black superstition and folk fears were exploited by parts of the white populace in America as a terrible control mechanism. In this regard I especially like to mention the book *Night Riders In Black Folk History* by the late Gladys-Marie Fry, Professor Emerita of Folklore and English at the University of Maryland, published in 2001. Tellingly, in one of the 1930s black monster panics that I described, a white newspaperman jokingly confessed how he had started one of the monster rumours himself.

Racism was an integral part of pre-WWII America. Its influence on the nightmares of the black communities is as unfortunate as it is undeniable. Another important book is *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* by Harriet A Washington (2007). Washington presents the first full account of the large-scale medical experimentation on unwitting Afro-American subjects from the era of slavery to the present day. As I wrote before, in the light of this sordid history one may understand why Barney Hill's reaction to the alleged UFO abduction was so markedly different from Betty's.

Afro-Americans have their own rich folklore, urban legends and fascinating forteana. It is vibrant, strong, very much alive and in many ways different from the folklore of white Americans. That does not alter the fact that in the 19th and early 20th centuries white slave-owners and segregationists waged a constant psychological warfare by exploiting and nurturing black fears as part of a hideous control system for suppression. Another great book that treats this is *I Heard It Through the Grapevine: Rumor in African-American Culture* by Patricia Turner (1994).

As I explained, those 1930s monster sightings could grow from cursory misidentifications and vague yarns into full-blown panics only because the black populations were already living in a state of fear. These monster panics occurred in the Southern States where virulent racism was the order of the day.

A few teenagers may indeed fantasise a monster just for the heck of it, as Mr Barnes says; but for such an imagined creature to coagulate into a monstrosity that terrifies an entire community, it needs to feed upon an already present, very real fear. In the 1930s monster panics I described the cause of that fear was the violent racism of a segregated America – a segregation that has never gone away but is, sadly, very much alive. In closing I cannot emphasise enough that many ghost, monster and phantom scares bubble up from social stress zones where misogyny, racism, inequality and ignorance flourish and thrive.

Theo Paijmans
The Hague, Netherlands

letters

Cutty Wren

Ireland has a very similar tradition to that of the Cutty Wren [**FT348:74-76**]. The Wren Boys are a rare and precious sight now, but at one time they were quite common in rural Ireland as they went from house to house on St Stephen's Day (26 December). The young lads would also blacken up and wear rags and sometimes wicker masks. They would carry a long pole crowned with holly; in earlier times a dead wren would be used instead. They would go door-to-door singing and playing tin whistles and fiddles, and would be rewarded with food and coins. They would sing:

The Wren, the Wren
The King of the Birds
On Stephen's Day
He was caught in the furze.
Up with the kettle
And down with the pan
Give us your answer
And let us be gone.

In Counties Sligo and Leitrim the wren was associated with the otherworldly Cliona who liked to lure young boys to drown in the ocean. Apparently the Wren Boys once also roamed in the Isle of Man, Wales and France. They could be an eerie sight. "We were never ready for them," one woman remembered. "They always arrived like an invasion from an outside world."

Paul Whyte, *Dublin*

What a gas

After reading Joshua Cutchin's article on paranormal odours [**FT350:30ff**], I discovered from a government information website that exposure to hydrogen sulphide can cause hallucinations. The reference is: www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxprofiles/tp114-c2.pdf

Richard George
St Albans, Hertfordshire

Dangerous hippos

Do hippos *really* kill "almost 3,000 people a year [in Africa]"? [**FT344:19**] I mean, that's eight a day and nine on Sundays. And they don't even live in heavily populated areas. I supposed it's a good job they aren't carnivorous.

Steve Yates
Birmingham, West Midlands

Editor's note: It was the *Daily Telegraph* (6 July 2016) that claimed hippos kill "almost 3,000 people a year". According to animaldanger.com, hippos "pose the biggest threat to those living in the continent of Africa", and kill "500+" people per annum. However, Wikipedia says that "there is no reliable research to support" the claim that hippos kill more people in Africa than do lions and elephants.

Candida's detector

I was interested to read the correspondence about ghost detectors [**FT350:72**]. It brought to mind the intriguing description of another similar device and its triumphant, if alarming, efficacy – namely Candida Lycett Green's UFO detector, which she describes in her marvellous autobiography *Over the Hills and Far Away* (Black Swan 2002). She writes:

"I had bought the device through an advert in the *Flying Saucer Review*, which I took in the 1960s because my friend John Michell took it too. He is a world authority on ancient science.

"He made me realise that it was arrogant not to believe in almost everything. All official reports of UFOs, usually from pilots, described the presence of a strong magnetic field resulting in the pointers on their control panels going haywire."

Her UFO detector apparently looked similar to a mobile phone charger. The instructions that came with it went as follows:

"Before plugging the power pack into the mains insert black plug on the mains power pack into the respective socket on the detector.

"The device is a sensitive magnetic flux detector capable of resolving down to field strengths of 15 cersteds, pulsing or moving from infinitely fast to one centimetre per second. The magnetic pick-up coil requires only one pulse at the above figures to lock up the relay, thus sounding the buzzer. Amplifier gain is approx. 40 decibels.

"**Important**. Whenever the buzzer sounds – i.e. when an unknown magnetic field is present – repeat the above steps to reset the device. If, however, resetting is ineffective a very strong magnetic field is acting on the pick-up coil. Check the sky *immediately*. If resetting is effective, the UFO is probably still some way off, and you have more time to prepare a camera, etc.

"Note: it is not yet known whether *all* UFOs have a magnetic field; thus, if you observe a UFO and the detector does not operate, please report the occurrence to the appropriate UFO society."

Candida writes:

"I determinedly plugged my detector into the mains and after a while forgot all about it, because the buzzer never went off.

"About three years later I went to see a film with a friend, leaving Rupert [her husband], who had some work to do, at home. When we returned he was white as a sheet. He had heard this violent buzzing sound and had finally tracked it down to the magnetic-field detector. A thorough sceptic about UFOs, he had nonetheless thought he had better check the sky. He walked on to our balcony and there, straight ahead, was a large light moving horizontally and slowly across the sky. It took 10 minutes to cross his line of vision. Converted to total belief in UFOs, he rang the *Daily Telegraph*, which published his story.

"Two years later the buzzer went off again, at three in the morning, when I was alone. I was

so terrified that I didn't dare look out of the window. I turned the machine off and drew the blankets over my head. I felt safe like that in the still, dark night in the solitary bedroom."

I wonder if more of these devices still exist, and if their owners find them similarly useful.

Merrily Harpur
Cattistock, Dorset

Not dragonflies

I would like to respond to the rather condescending letters ['Dragonflies, maybe?' **FT347:75**] telling me what the writers think I ought to have seen but ignoring what I actually saw, in reply to my letter about – and sketch of – a strange insect [**FT237:77**]. I am a country girl born and bred, and still am. I have seen thousands of insects over the years and hundreds of dragonflies, soaring, flying eating, mating, dying and in my house. Nothing about them resembled the creature that I saw in 1960 or 1961, that is forever seared in my mind. It passed my head spinning and making a whirring sound, which is why at the time I thought someone had shot an arrow at me. It was 6in (15cm) long and shuttlecock-shaped.

I had a good look at it as it settled on the door. It had a round bullet-shaped black head, with a black shiny ruff around the neck, and about six long ribbon-like tendrils about half an inch (13mm) wide. These looked like satin, very shiny, and were alternate black and red. There was no sign of wings or legs. (I have kept the sketch I made at the time). I still thought that it was an arrow of some kind until it flew off to the back of my house. At this point I was completely unnerved and ran into the house and locked the door. I have inquired at museums and looked at reference books galore, but have never seen anything remotely like it. If I had encountered it yesterday, I would have seen it as some sort of drone, but of course nothing like that existed back then.

Ruth Summersides
By email

Aspidistra

Lewis Hurst [**FT346:65**] passed on a story told by his father who, during World War II, had worked at Bletchley Park. In the story a local man had had a shock after hearing a loud voice from a bucket of coal. Well, he wasn't Robinson Crusoe. From 1943 until the German surrender, Home Guardsmen heard voices coming from rusty barbed wire entanglements, police officers heard voices from rusty street signs, and housewives heard voices from gas stoves. Sometimes they heard music, but usually it was voices, in German, which made it more alarming (although sometimes the voices were reported as just "foreign" which seems to have been concerning enough). The clue was that rusty or corroded metal was involved and all such instances were in a particular part of England. If metal has a thin layer of oxidation and is in contact with another piece of metal it will act as a diode, and will detect and demodulate an Amplitude Modulated (AM) signal, if the signal is sufficiently strong. As the current from the diode surges back and forth in the rhythm of speech, the current will heat and cool the metal causing enough expansion to make the metal act as a loudspeaker.

Of course, it has to be a powerful transmitter and, as Mr Hurst suggests, such a secret transmitter was nearby. Codenamed "Aspidistra" (after the popular song by Gracie Fields, 'It's the biggest… in the world') it had been purpose-built by the Radio Corporation of America. It consisted of the main transmitter, a 600kw monster and a 500w unmodulated transmitter usually positioned 80km (50 miles) away, which would mislead any German direction-finding. A 50kw AM transmitter is often called a "clear channel" transmitter in the industry as it will have a range of hundreds of kilometres at night. Aspidistra would have been received clearly in Eastern Europe, but its target audience was in Germany where it would pop up on a legitimate Deutschesender frequency and provide black propaganda or instructions to local authorities designed to cause chaos and confusion, and to spread the rumour that Allied spies were everywhere. It certainly made itself felt in the popular German imagination. I remember seeing a German film of the 1950s (starring, I think, Gert Frobe) where as British bombers attacked Berlin (?) a spy, identifiable as French from his beret, neckerchief and striped shirt, opens a baguette within which is concealed a radio transmitter, and directs the bombers to their targets.

I have written about Aspidistra at more length in an earlier letter [**FT303:73**]. My original source was volume II of Sefton Delmer's autobiography, *Black Boomerang* (Secker & Warburg 1962). So Mr Hurst's father was correct in the origin of the voice from the bucket, but as for his speculation that a crystal found in coal had detected the radio signal – while iron pyrites (the crystal mentioned) can act as a diode, in this case it was the oxidised metal.

John Alexander Faulkner
Sydney, Australia

The Mischief Rule

As a lover of High Anglican and Catholic-style worship involving incense, may I offer a potential line of defence against any arbitrary application of the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 which David Barrett fears criminalises "every Catholic Church in the land" using incense [**FT350:73**]?

Fortunately, there is more than one way of reading any Act or regulation. Normally judges apply a literal interpretation, which might impose liability on a strict reading with this Act; but there are two alternatives to such literal readings, known respectively as the 'Golden Rule' and the 'Mischief Rule'. Judges may use these two rules when finding the meaning of an Act and wherever an injustice or an absurdity might result from a literal interpretation.

With respect to the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016, the Mischief Rule clearly provides a route out of the dilemma that Mr Barrett highlights. Dating back to Heydon's Case (1584) 76 ER 637, in applying the Mischief Rule, the court must identify the harm or 'mischief' that Parliament considered should be suppressed and the gap in the existing law, and then proceed to apply the law so as to cover the activity that Parliament wishes to curb.

In the wonderful language of Lord Coke, the task of the judge in applying the Mischief Rule must be to interpret the law in a way that "shall suppress the mischief, and advance the remedy, and to suppress subtle inventions and evasions for continuance of the mischief, and pro private commodo [for private convenience] and to add force and life to the cure and remedy, according to the true intent of the makers of the Act and pro bono publico [for the public benefit]."

Furthermore, it is a general presumption that penal statutes must always be construed narrowly, in favour of the liberty of the subject (i.e. if there is any ambiguity in the law, the accused should not be convicted). Also, a judge may have recourse to what is written in Hansard (permitted since 1991) as a further aid to finding the intention of Parliament.

Clearly, Parliament was not trying to impose liability upon incense being burned during church services and rituals. In the case of the Psychoactive Substances Act the 'mischief' and the 'subtle inventions and evasions' were the activities of certain drug pushers providing 'legal highs' causing intoxication in users seeking to drug themselves, and which fell outside existing legislative provisions.

And whilst (as Mr Barrett points out) the intention of the government not to prosecute churches is only to be found in guidance, such an official declaration of policy could found the basis for a judicial review of any decision to prosecute a priest or congregation using incense for religious purposes.

Alan Murdie
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

PAUL TAYLOR

letters

SIMULACRA CORNER

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images.
Send them (with your postal address) to Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP or to sieveking@forteantimes.com.

A wooden badger on Burke Street in Sydney, Australia, photographed by Adam Norton.

Tim & Jen Williams came across this 'lemur' beech root in Cawdor Woods, by Cawdor Castle, near Nairn in Scotland.

Juan Hayward saw this… crocodile (?) while out walking the dog near where he lives in Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

A long-necked critter at Stoke Gabriel in Devon, spotted by Rory Cooper.

it happened to me...

Have you had strange experiences that you cannot explain?
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Severed heads

I don't know how often you talk about heads impaled on stakes, but it's not often I do.

I have recently had a knee replacement. The pain relief isn't working well so I am spending a lot of time in the arms of Morpheus, via his friends Timmy Tramadol and Catherine Codeine, so vivid dreams are the norm. I got back into bed in the early hours of this morning after a visit to the bathroom and as soon as my head hit the pillow I could see the bed was surrounded by impaled, mediæval-looking heads on stakes in various states of decay. Oddly enough they just seemed natural, not particularly scary.

This morning I had a physio appointment. There was a major traffic jam so there was a lot more time than usual to chat, and the taxi driver, whom we'd never met, talked of his time as a lorry driver in Eastern Europe. There was one place he'd love to revisit – Vlad the Impaler's old castle. "You walk up the drawbridge," he said, "and all around you are these stakes where he used to impale the heads of his enemies."

Was it pure coincidence, or a dream foretelling the conversation, or the stranger picking up on my dream, and diverting his own thoughts?

Graeme Kenna
Wallasey, Merseyside

Signing Magna Carta

I have lived with my wife now for many years and she has become accustomed to the fact that I occasionally 'wake' in the night to talk to her, usually about total nonsense. I have my eyes open and appear to be fully lucid, yet I only have vague memories of it the following morning and it is evident that I was doing some kind of 'sleep-talking'.

In the summer of 1995 an instance of this occurred that has left me intrigued ever since. I awoke sometime after midnight to shake my wife until she awoke, stating in a forceful way that "you must sign the Magna Carta".

I awoke, stating in a forceful way that "you must sign the Magna Carta"

Somewhat bemused my wife told me to go back to sleep and took great pleasure in reminding me of the incident the following morning.

At this time my wife and I used to share a drive to work, a 45-minute trip during which we would occasionally listen to the radio. Two days after the sleep-talking incident we were listening to a radio programme in which the presenter ran through a list of anniversaries for that day – one of which was the signing of Magna Carta at Runnymede. My wife and I looked at each other in total surprise, having immediately recalled the events of the night two days prior.

So what was this phenomenon that I experienced? Could it simply be coincidence, or part of some greater synchronistic picture? Maybe even a past life memory. Some people have suggested that I might have heard of the forthcoming anniversary and subconsciously noted it, thus stimulating the dream; but I find it hard to believe that such an insignificant anniversary (bearing in mind it was only a day and not a year) would have been broadcast prior to the event.

Doug Overton
Hampshire

A lucid dream

I've just woken up from one of my pitifully few lucid dreams. One of my recurring dream themes is wandering about foreign cities looking for second-hand bookshops. Over the years I have evolved a number of different, recognisable cities I travel to. I don't know their names, but they have a more or less consistent topography from dream to dream, with the same bookshops in the same places. I never seem to get around to buying any books in these dreams; it's all about the atmosphere of the streets and the ambience inside the shops.

This morning I dreamt about two little shops lying side by side somewhere. One of them had a sign saying it was closed, which was pretty irritating since it was closed the last time too. (I 'remembered' being there recently, but the memory could just as well be fake.) The other shop was open, though, so I went in. Some people were blocking a door I wanted to go through, so I rather rudely shunted them aside, only to find a small, cramped office with the lights out. As the others were getting somewhat hostile I left the shop.

Standing on the pavement, I found that I had forgotten my shoes inside. (I never actually took my shoes off, but I there I was, barefoot all the same.) The feeling of the rough ground was very unpleasant – probably a memory of the times I've gone barefoot in real life, something I intensely dislike. Because of the hostile atmosphere I didn't want to go back inside, but this is where the lucid dreaming kicked in. I thought, "Ah well, since I'm dreaming anyway, I can just dream some new shoes". This was of course not expressed in so many words; it was merely a thought-form. The interesting thing is that it took me a bit of effort to dream the new shoes. I had to 'will' them into existence, and it took some time. Also, the final products were strange, rubbery things that were somehow part of my legs – clearly a parallel to the accounts of aliens and little people whose hats, clothes or footwear seem to be part of their bodies. And then I woke up.

Nils Erik Grande
Oslo, Norway

Strange encounter

A man approached me in a local park and told me that he was from Ethiopia, and that he was looking for a woman he had seen in a dream. He asked me to pray to God, with him, for help in finding the woman. His request was granted but whether the prayer brought any results I will probably never know.

Richard Porter
Denver, Colorado

FORTEAN TRAVELLER

110. The Museum of Funeral History

JAN BONDESON pays a visit to one of Vienna's stranger collections and finds it's the perfect place for anyone worried about being buried alive.

Among the many curious museums of Vienna, the *Bestattungsmuseum*, or Museum of Funeral History, is not undeserving of mention. It is situated in one of the pavilions at the entrance of the *Zentralfriedhof*, a large cemetery in the city's southern suburbs and houses displays of model hearses, undertakers' uniforms, coffins and various mourning paraphernalia.

It is worth a visit not only by those of a gloomy and funereal frame of mind, but also by historians of the development of cemeteries and sepulchral culture, and those with an interest in apparent death and the risk of premature burial. Among its exhibits, the museum boasts a *Herzstich-Messer*, a sharp knife intended for use by people who did not trust doctors and had made wills to avoid the dreadful fate of being buried prematurely, stating that the family practitioner should stab them in the heart with this knife after they had been declared dead. Readers of my book *Buried Alive* (or *Lebendig Begraben* as it is called in the German translation) will know that it was a regular occurrence in Victorian times that people fearful of being entombed alive left a will saying that their arteries should be cut, that they should be stabbed in the heart or the throat, or that their heads should be cut off. In their wills, both Hans Christian Andersen and Alfred Nobel directed that their arteries should be cut after death. The legal position of the doctor if blood gushed out when an artery was cut, or if the apparently dead 'patient' groaned loudly with pain after the *Herzstich-Messer* had been applied, does not seem to have been considered at the time; reassuringly, however, there is nothing to suggest that any person died as a result of their excessive precautions against a premature tomb.

Interestingly, the Museum of Funeral History also boasts another very curious contraption to detect apparent death and safeguard against a premature burial, namely a *Rettungs-Wecker* or mortuary alarm bell. The mechanism works as follows: a rope is tied around the wrist of the presumed deceased in the mortuary, so that if the 'corpse' moves, the alarm is triggered and the bell rings in the office of the mortuary attendant. The *Rettungs-Wecker* came to the Museum of Funeral History in the early 1970s, on loan from the Electro-Pathological Museum. When the electro-pathologists wanted their mortuary alarm bell back in 1976, a fully working replica was made by the Schollgruber clock-making firm, and set up at the Museum of Funeral History. The collection of the Electro-Pathological Museum is today part of the Technical Museum of Vienna, but although this large museum has voluminous display cabinets full of antique vacuum cleaners and other archaic paraphernalia of yesteryear, the original *Rettungs-Wecker* is kept in storage and is not on public display. It is said to have been made in 1828, at the order of the prison governor Johan Nepomuk Peter, for use in a small civic mortuary at the cemetery in Währing, which is today a suburb in north-western Vienna.

It is recorded that in 1860, after an appeal from the pædiatrician Franz Hügel, a new waiting mortuary was constructed at the *Zentralfriedhof* in Vienna. It was still operational in 1874, when it was featured in an illustrated magazine. A top-flight, modern hospital for the dead, it boasted a large corpse-room full of corpse-beds equipped with electrical contacts and bells of recent manufacture, presumed to be less conducive to false alarms than the earlier systems. The mortuary attendant could sit watching a large frame with little electrical bells under indicators for each of the corpse-beds, rather like a hotel porter waiting for one of the guests to ring for room service. There was a smaller corpse-room for suicides, conspicuously lacking the electrical alarm system.

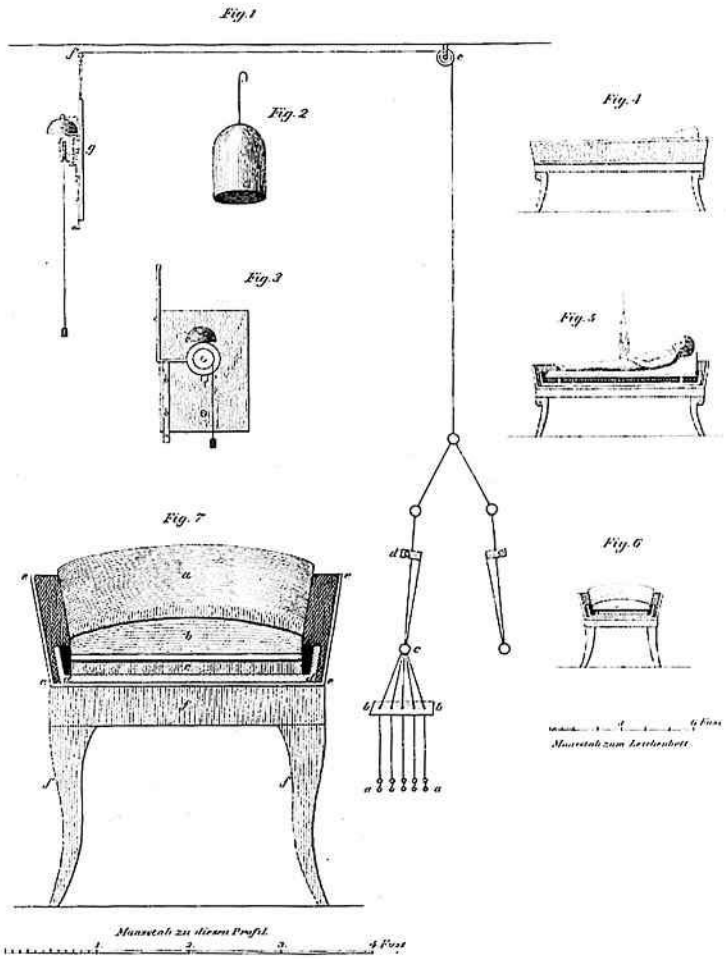
Due to its primitive manufacture, it can be discounted that the mortuary alarm bell at the Museum of Funeral History has anything to do with the waiting mortuary at the *Zentralfriedhof* itself, however; the story of its manufacture in 1828, for use at a small provincial mortuary, is to my mind fully credible. Moreover, a book from 1834, describing the waiting mortuary in Weimar, features a mechanical alarm system very much resembling the Vienna *Rettungs-Wecker*. Although Germany and Austria once had waiting mortuaries aplenty, most of them equipped with mechanical or electrical systems for the detection of apparent death, the mortuary alarm bell at the Museum of Funeral History is probably unique in the world, along with the original contraption kept in storage at the Technical Museum. The only waiting mortuary that has survived world wars and peacetime 'development' is the old *Schijndodenhuis* [house for the apparently dead] of The Hague, which today houses offices for the funeral administrators.

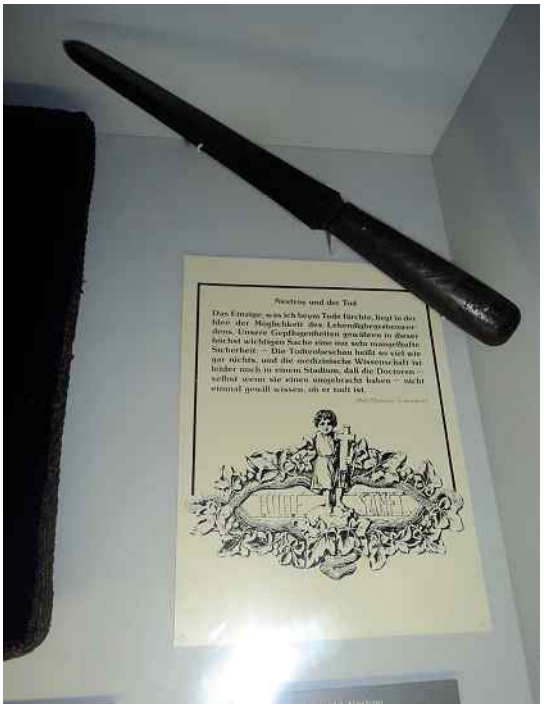
JAN BONDESON is a regular contributor to FT. His latest book is *The Ripper of Waterloo Road: The Murder of Eliza Grimwood in 1838* (History Press, 2017).

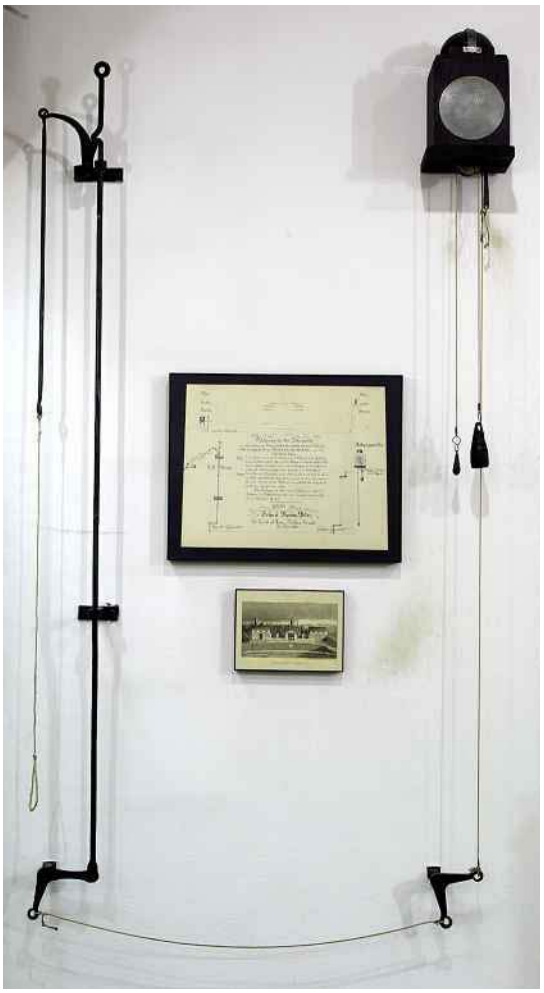
Die Todtenhalle des Zentralfriedhofes.

Es ist ein Bild aus der werdenden großen Todtenstadt, | Fall sein, daß bei Einem oder dem Anderen der „Eingerich- | Für den Fall nun, daß der Körper des so Aufgebahrten
aus dem Schattenreiche Wiens, das wir heute vorführen — | ten" die „Einkennung" auf einem Mißverständniß beruhte, | auch nur die leiseste Bewegung macht, senkt sich der Punkt
das Bild der Todtenhalle. | und um den entsetzlichen Folgen eines solchen Mißverständ- | e des Hebels auf einen Stift nieder, wodurch ein elektrischer
An dieser Stätte beginnt die nivellirende Macht des | nisses vorzubeugen, ist an jeder Seite dieser zweischläfrigen | Strom belebt wird, der, blitzschnell durch die ersichtlichen
Todes, sie macht Hoch und Nieder gleich und der Eine | Bänke eine Messingplatte angebracht, die auch auf der | Drähte laufend, im Zimmer des Todtenwächters — Bild
mag auf sechs „Atlassen" ruhen, der Andere auf dem billig- | großen Zeichnung II, bemerkt, aber besser noch von der | Nr. 1 — eine Lärmglocke in Bewegung setzt und an dem
sten Tannsitzen hier eintreffen, sie werden da Alle gleich hart | speciellen Zeichnung IV, abgesehen werden kann. | Rahmen an der Wand die Nummer jener Bank hervor-
auf Holz gebettet, um die gesetzlich festgestellte Zeit zu über- | Diese Messingplatte dient dazu, das Verbundensein | scheln, die in der Leichenhalle den Lebenszeichen von sich
dauern, bis sie unwiederbringlich der Mutter Erde einver- | eines Scheintodten in der Leichenhalle sofort zu konstatiren, | gebenden Körper trägt.
leibt werden. | sobald ein solcher auch nur das leiseste Lebenszeichen von | Die hier abgebildete Leichenhalle ist in drei Räume
Die Uhr in Arm- und Glied in die Legionen des | sich gibt. Die Messingplatte zeigt einen rechtwinkeligen | abgetheilt, deren einer speciell für Selbstmörder bestimmt
Todtenreiches eingereiht liegen, sie schlafen Alle schon jenen | Hebel a—b—c. Auf diesen Hebel wird jede Leiche derart | ist. Die Boden der Selbstmörder haben viele elektrische
tiefen, gekannten Schlaf, und dem man nicht wieder zu neuen | hingelegt, daß sie mit dem Rumpf auf die stacheligen Spitzen | Vorrichtung nicht.
Sorgen und Mühen aufmacht; aber es könnte doch der | zwischen a—b und der eine Arm auf b—c zu liegen kommt.

Die heutige Nummer mit Inbegriff der Beilage ist 10 Seiten stark.







B&F WIEN / BESTATTUNGSMUSEUM

FACING PAGE:
The entrance to the *Bestattungsmuseum*.

TOP LEFT: The corpse-room of the waiting mortuary of the Vienna *Zentralfriedhof*, from the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* of 5 October 1874.

TOP RIGHT: The *Herzstich-Messer*.

ABOVE: The *Rettungs-Wecker*.

LEFT: Design of a corpse-bed at the waiting mortuary of Weimar, from Dr Carl Schwalbe's book *Das Leichenhaus in Weimar* (Leipzig 1834).

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Why Fortean?

Fortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

FT toes no party line.

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PHENOMENOMIX

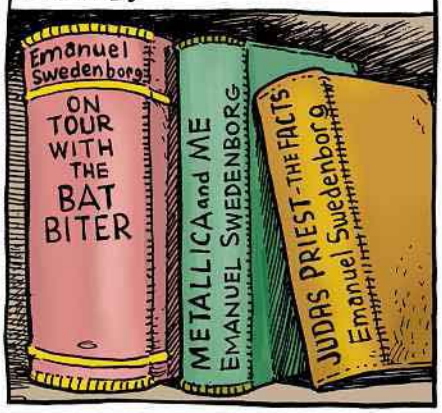
SWEDENBORG

HUNT EMERSON & KEVIN JACKSON

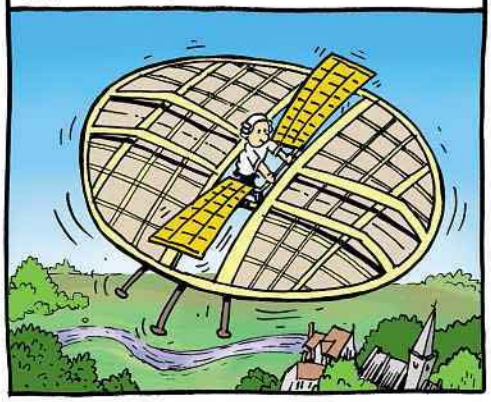
EMANUEL SWEDENBORG (1688-1772) WAS ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL MYSTICS OF THE LAST THREE CENTURIES...

UNTIL HE WAS WELL INTO HIS FIFTIES, SWEDENBORG'S INTERESTS WERE MAINLY PRACTICAL AND SCIENTIFIC! HE WORKED AS A MINES INSPECTOR...

...AND BECAME FAMOUS ACROSS EUROPE FOR HIS BOOKS ABOUT METAL!



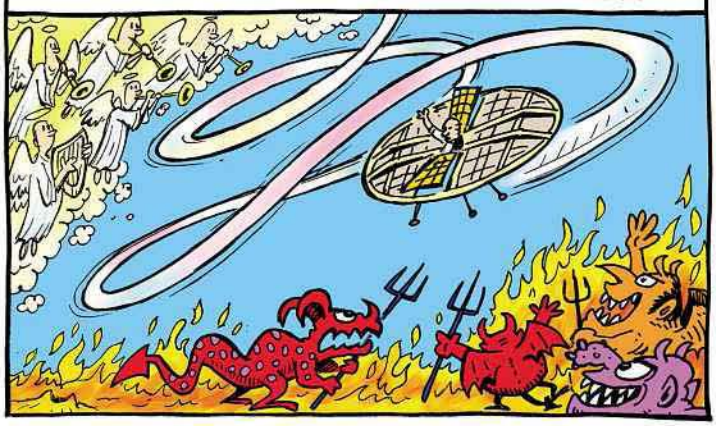
HE CAME UP WITH ALL SORTS OF INVENTIONS, INCLUDING A FLYING MACHINE!



BUT THEN WEIRD THINGS BEGAN TO HAPPEN! IN 1743 HE WAS HAVING DINNER IN A LONDON PUB, AND NOTICED A STRANGE MAN WHO SAID:

LATER THAT NIGHT HE SAW THE MAN AGAIN IN A DREAM...

AFTER THAT, THE VISIONS CAME THICK AND FAST! SWEDENBORG VISITED BOTH HEAVEN AND HELL...



HE HAD CONVERSATIONS WITH THE INHABITANTS OF MARS, JUPITER, SATURN AND OTHER PLANETS...

HE ALSO BECAME FAMOUS FOR FEATS OF TELEPATHY! HUNDREDS OF MILES FROM HOME, HE SAW HIS HOUSE THREATENED BY FIRE - AND HE WAS RIGHT!

HE ALSO PREDICTED THE EXACT TIME AND DATE OF HIS OWN DEATH! A MAIDSERVANT SAID THAT HE LOOKED FORWARD CHEERFULLY TO HIS AFTERLIFE AS IF HE WERE ABOUT TO GO ON HOLIDAY!

AFTER HIS DEATH, SWEDENBORG'S WRITINGS WERE KEENLY STUDIED BY OTHER GREAT OCCULTISTS, INCLUDING:

COMING NEXT MONTH

"THIS EERIE WEASEL"

THE FORGOTTEN ORIGINS OF GEF THE TALKING MONGOOSE

VICTORIAN HORRORS

THE WATERLOO ROAD RIPPER AND ELIZA GRIMWOOD'S GHOST

+

JAMMEH THE NUT, WEREWOLF THEOLOGY, PREMATURE GENIUSES, AND MUCH MORE...

FORTEAN TIMES 353

ON SALE 27 APRIL 2017

STRANGE DEATHS

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

Oliver Park, a 51-year-old German tourist, slipped to his death in the mountaintop Inca city of Machu Picchu in the Peruvian Andes on 29 June 2016. He had ignored a security cordon and went up to a dangerous cliff edge where he asked another visitor to take a picture of him as he jumped in the air. He lost his balance and fell 130ft (40m) to his death. It took rescue workers 90 minutes to reach him. Only the day before, a South Korean tourist died while taking a selfie on the Gocta waterfall in Peru's northern Amazonian region. He was believed to have fallen 1,600ft (488m). *Times, 2 July 2016.*

An unnamed 16-year-old in South India was killed while trying to take a selfie on 30 January 2016. He walked onto railway tracks in Chennai in the hope of getting a good shot of an oncoming passenger train thundering towards him in the background, but he failed to move off the tracks in time. *D.Telegraph, 2 Feb 2016*.

Ramandeep Singh, 15, died on 29 April 2016 after accidentally shooting himself in the head while posing for a selfie with his father's gun. He pulled the trigger instead of pushing the shutter release button. He was taken to hospital in the Punjab, but died two days later. *D.Telegraph, 2 May 2016.*

Carmen Greenway, 41, died following a bicycle crash moments after she took a smiling selfie on the way home from a pub dinner celebrating her mother's birthday on 18 August. The mother of two is believed to have had one hand on the bike as she hit a bumpy patch of road and lost control. As she wasn't wearing a helmet, she fractured her skull and died six days later in hospital after suffering a cardiac arrest. Her mother was riding behind her when she fell, just 100 yards from her family home in Isleworth, west London. *D.Telegraph, 5 Oct 2016*.

The number of people who die each year taking selfies is on the rise: 15 in 2014, 39 in 2015 and 73 in the first eight months of 2016. The first report (by a reputable news source) of a selfie-taker dying while snapping a picture was in March 2014. Since then (up to mid-November 2016), there had been 127 around the world – 76 in India, nine in Pakistan, eight in the US and six in Russia. The most likely cause of death was falling from a great height, with people going to extreme lengths to take a selfie on cliffs or the top of buildings to impress followers on social media. Instagram users such as Drewsssik built a large following online with photos taken on top of tall structures. He died in 2015 after falling from a building. In India, there are more selfie deaths related to trains, due to the belief that posing on or next to train tracks with one's best friend is a sign of never-ending friendship. *BBC News, 17 Nov 2016.*

Brain-eating amœbas can enter an unwitting swimmer's brain via their nose, after which their chances of survival are slim. The organism, *Nægleria fowleri*, lurks in fresh water, although infections can also result from swimming in hot springs or improperly chlorinated pools. Of the 35 reported cases in the US between 2005 and 2014, only two people survived. Last August, a 19-year-old woman died after being infected in Maryland. After the amœba enters the body, it heads straight for the brain, where the first areas it destroys are the olfactory regions that we use to smell, and parts of the frontal lobe, crucial for cognition and controlling behaviour. Abdul Mannan at the Aga Khan University in Karachi, Pakistan, suspected the amœba might be attracted to a chemical called acetylcholine (ACh), which is released in large amounts by cells at the front of the brain. He found that one of the amœba proteins has a structure similar to the human receptor for ACh. It is this that probably causes the amœbas to head straight for the brain. *Metro, 29 Sept 2016*.

Experts believe a jogger was killed by seaweed fumes. Jean-René Auffray, 50, was found dead in an estuary at Gouessant in Brittany, apparently poisoned by sea lettuce, common along the Brittany coast and round the Channel Islands, which rots to make hydrogen sulphide. The gas has been linked to the death of wild boars and horses. Auffray's official cause of death was given as a heart attack, but experts want more tests. *Sun, D.Mirror, 13 Jan 2017.*

Three people were arrested on suspicion of manslaughter after a diabetic grandmother died following Chinese 'slap treatment' at a country retreat. Danielle Carr-Gomm, 71, was found dead hours after taking part in the "Self-Healing Workshop" at Cleeve House country hotel in Seend, Wiltshire. The treatment is supposed to eradicate illness-causing toxins from the body by hard, reaped slapping, fasting and painful stretching on a bench, a technique known as *paida-lajin*. Carr-Gomm, who suffered from type 1 diabetes, had a lifelong fear of needles and had briefly stopped taking insulin after undergoing previous workshops. *D.Telegraph, 14 Nov 2016*.

Italian vet Luciano Ponzetto, 55, received death threats and hate mail after posting on Facebook a snap of himself in Tanzania next to a lion he had killed. While out hunting birds in the hills above Turin in mid-December, he slipped on ice and plunged to his death down a 100ft (30m) ravine in the Colle delle Oche. His body was recovered by helicopter. *Sun, 13 Dec; Metro, 14 Dec 2016.*

On 28 January, a family was crushed to death by the hundreds of pounds of clothes they had hoarded in their home. The bodies of the married couple, together with their 12-year-old daughter, were found buried under the mountain of material. Investigators believe the floor of their first floor flat in Alicante, Spain, caved in due to the weight. Rescuers aided by firefighters had to remove a massive amount of clothes and other items to uncover the victims. The freak accident happened between 8 and 9am, but the victims were not discovered until 1pm by their older daughter, 18. *D.Mail, 30 Jan 2017*.

Writing – A Job with All Sorts of Opportunities for All Kinds of People

by Phil Busby

Do you fancy a challenge? What about the chance to make some money, get VIP access to major sporting and cultural events, or free holidays abroad? How would you like to look in the mirror and say, "Yeah – I did it!"

Well then, writing might be just up your street.

People have some funny ideas about writing. As a profession, it's not just for 'special' folk. Anyone can do it. If you love words, and stories, and you're not afraid of hard work, that's all you need.

"My tutor was lovely, encouraging and offered me great constructive criticism."

For the last 27 years The Writers Bureau has been helping new writers get started in the business. Writers like Louise Kennedy, who struck gold when she started blogging about her life on a boat from the viewpoint of ... her cat. Baily Boat Cat was picked up by a major publisher and turned into a book which now sells world wide. "The Writers Bureau has given me the confidence to follow my dreams," Louise says. "My tutor was lovely, encouraging and offered me great constructive criticism."

Another WB student, Martin Read, wanted to keep active in his retirement and his writing led to a great little bonus. "As a result of my cricket articles, I have been elected into The Cricket Writers Club – an organisation that counts experienced journalists among its members. One of the perks of this membership is a press card that gives me entry into all of England's cricket stadium press boxes." And there are not many that get in there.

Then there's Jacqueline Jaynes, who just loves to travel: "The Writers Bureau course has done everything I hoped it would and more. There was a clear progression through chapters so that my writing skills and confidence grew steadily with feedback from my tutor. The market research activities were invaluable for opening up potential new avenues for publication."

Those new avenues led to a travel website where Jacqueline started writing short articles. Soon she was asked to join the team, and now she and her husband get expenses paid trips all over the world in exchange for reviews!

These are just some of the many inspirational true stories from Writers Bureau students. And there's no reason why you shouldn't join them. Who knows, this time next year I could be writing about your success. With a 15-day trial and money back guarantee, there's nothing to lose and potentially a whole new life to gain. So why not visit the website at www.writersbureau.com or call Freephone 0800 856 2008 for more information?

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Sarah Plater "I'm currently working on my fourth book, have been paid for my writing by at least 15 different magazines, and now earn half my income from writing – all thanks to The Writers Bureau's course."

Walter Dinjos "I enrolled in The Writers Bureau's Creative Writing course in the hope of building my confidence as a writer and ending my cycle of publishing failures. I currently work as a content writer with a writing agency and have even won a writing competition."

Elise Jones "I was being encouraged by The Writers Bureau to send out my work. This I did. Having sent out seven pieces five of them have been published."

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